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THE BOOK

OF

THE SONNET

2007

EDITED BY

LEIGH HUNT and S. ADAMS LEE

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Milton House, Ludgate Hill,
December, 1866.

THIS WORK

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED TO

GEORGE H. BOKER,

AS A TOKEN OF THE REGARD AND FRIENDSHIP

OF

THE SURVIVING EDITOR.

PUBLISHERS' NOTICE.

THE selections from the Sonnets of American writers have, for the most part, and whenever practicable, been made with the consent of the authors and their publishers; and for this privilege the publishers of "The Book of the Sonnet" desire here to make their acknowledgments.

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INTRODUCTORY LETTER.

TO SAMUEL ADAMS LEE, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—

(For though you are still young, and I am now indeed old, having outlived the period usually assigned to the age of man, yet, to say nothing of graver reasons, friendship, you know, may exist in its most companionable form between juniors and their elders, when founded on the love of such never-fading things as the beauties of nature and the books which they have inspired,) you gratified me extremely, when you asked for some remarks from my pen on the subject of the class of poems from which you meditated a selection. The interest which with a zeal so generous you take in the Transatlantic welfare of my writings would alone be as sufficient as it ought to be to set me gladly to the task; but you considered, I have no doubt, (for I have learnt to detect your artifices in such matters,) that the subject would be one that I should like for its own sake also; and when you concluded your request with mentioning the names

of the distinguished persons who agree with you in thinking that the remarks would be welcome to the American public, the measure of my satisfaction was "full measure, pressed down, and running over."

It may be thought by some persons who do not happen to be conversant with the particular form of verse denominated the SONNET, that, while making extracts from poets, we might have done better than confine ourselves to a species of composition not yet associated in the general mind with the idea of anything very marked or characteristic; but it will not be difficult to show, that the Sonnet, while admitting of a greater and happier levity than those who think lightest of it imagine, is in reality connected with some of the most thoughtful, some of the most affecting, and some of the grandest events of the most exalted men.

"Scorn not the Sonnet," says one of its most dignified masters:—

> "Scorn not the Sonnet. Critic, you have frowned,
> Mindless of its just honors. With this key
> Shakespeare unlocked his heart; the melody
> Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound;
> A thousand times this pipe did Tasso sound;
> With it Camoens soothed an exile's grief;
> The sonnet glittered a gay myrtle-leaf
> Amid the cypress with which Dante crowned
> His visionary brow; a glow-worm lamp,
> It cheered mild Spenser, called from Fairy-land
> To struggle through dark ways; and when a damp
> Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand

> The thing became a trumpet, whence he blew
> Soul-animating strains, — alas ! too few."

The regret expressed by Wordsworth, in the conclusion of his sonnet, will, I hope, serve as a warning against similar shortcomings to the Bryants, Longfellows, and Lowells among you, and all others whom it may concern, but with whose names and genius I am not equally well acquainted. Next indeed in enjoyment to the gratification which I experience for my own sake as well as for that of your friendly zeal, in complying with your wish in regard to the present volume, is the indulgence of a hope, that, as previous writers on the class of poetry which it illustrates have not exhausted the subject, and as the selection of the many beautiful specimens which it contains proceeds upon a plan combining personal with poetical interest, it may help to excite a disposition to the cultivation of the Sonnet in all poetical quarters, particularly those of the country in which the book makes its first appearance. Reasons for the pleasure and other advantages to be expected from so doing will be found, I trust, in the Essay which follows this letter. I cannot help looking upon myself, in this matter, as a kind of horticulturist who has brought a stock of flowers with him from Italy and England, for the purpose of diffusing their seeds and off-sets, wherever the soil can be found congenial; and therefore, with your leave, and with the privilege of free-speaking which

is conceded to guests and graybeards, I hereby give notice, that if in the course of a few years from the date of this intimation a good crop of Sonnets, of all hues and varieties, does not start up throughout the said quarters, like a new flush of beauty to your meadows, or song to your groves, (for birds and flowers grow ripe together,) I shall be inclined to ask my American cousins what right they possess not only to the wit and the poetry that already flourish among them, but to the more than Italian sun that warms so much of their territory, and to that extraordinary feathered songster, the Mocking-Bird, which is the only imitator in the world that beats what it imitates.

Be this however as it may, and let our Selections prosper in any respect or not, I am ever,

Dear Mr. Lee,

Your obliged and affectionate friend,

LEIGH HUNT.

AN ESSAY

ON THE

CULTIVATION, HISTORY, AND VARIETIES

OF THE SPECIES OF POEM CALLED

THE SONNET.

ESSAY.

I.

ON THE DESIRABLENESS OF CULTIVATING THE SONNET.

THE object of this Essay is twofold, — first, to assist in furthering the cultivation and enjoyment of a species of verse peculiarly fitted to diffuse an acquaintance with poetical composition; and, second, to perform the like office in diffusing an acquaintance with Italian as well as English poetry.

By "cultivation" is meant the practice of Sonnet-writing by such as are inclined to poetize in that direction; by the "enjoyment" of the Sonnet, the pleasure already taken, or to be taken in it, by lovers of poetry in general, whether writers or readers.

As to "Italian and English poetry," the words carry with them their own recommendation to all who know anything of poetry or music; yet I always feel so grateful to the very sound of the Italian language, when about to put its words on paper, that by way of prelude to my task I cannot but quote what has been said of it by

a late gallant and conscientious writer, Captain Henry Napier, who, in the sixth volume of his "Florentine History," no less truly than gracefully describes it as "a language replete with beauty, abounding in energy, adapted alike to the deepest pathos and the loftiest flights of poetry, — as well to the breathings of youthful love, as to the resistless energy of passion, or the liveliest sallies of wit, — descending from the sublime to the burlesque, from the palace to the cottage, with the grace and facility of a bird, and charming in every flight."

There would be more poets in a nation, more pleasure in the general reading of poetry, and no fear of the incompatibility of such pleasures with the duties of active life, if people in all parts of the world were as aware as they have long been in the South of Europe what an amount of good poetry and of wholesome recreation can be put into the small compass of this favorite of the Italian language, the Sonnet. They would be glad to find how much enjoyment can be got out of the mere perusal of it by a little more knowledge of its requirements; what a pastime worthy of their genius the study and construction of it have been to some of the greatest men; and how little, with anybody, a like diversity of his leisure need interfere with the ordinary business of life, any more than the meal, or the walk, or any other of those every-day recreations which are necessary to the right and wholesome despatch of business itself.

The sonnet-writers of Italy are innumerable. Not only all their celebrated poets are among them, — perhaps it may be said, every poet without exception, — but men of all ranks, callings, and professions, — soldiers, statesmen, mechanics, princes, lawyers, merchants, paint-

ers, physicians, men of science, monks, cardinals, composers, &c., not excepting a multitude of ladies. Indeed, it was not to be expected that ladies would be left out where so much love is concerned, to say nothing of the domestic affections in general, which have produced some of the most beautiful of all sonnets. And if the present condition of Italy be thought a counter-evidence to the good of its example, let us recollect all which Italy did of old, united or disunited, and all which its enemies fear it would do, if united again. Napoleon is said to have been of opinion that it would again govern the world. Countrymen of Alfred and of Washington may be allowed to differ with that opinion; not to mention the generals they produced in the times of Anne and George the Fourth. But Napoleon — himself an Italian — was not hindered by the sonnets of Italy from coming to that conclusion; nor did the sonnet-writers themselves fail to do their best towards rousing the energies of their *prosers* with constant remonstrances and reproaches. Most of the poets of Italy, some of the greatest in particular, have been men active out in the world, — sometimes, it has been thought, too active, — a charge which Tories in England have brought against Milton, and Whigs against Spenser, — both of them, like Dante, writers of sonnets as well as of poems on a scale the most grand.

There is a combination of advantages peculiar to the sonnet, which, when acquaintance is once made with it, naturally tend to make it a favorite with everybody. These are, first, that, with the exception of one class of subjects, — the dithyrambical, which disdains all order and bounds, — there is none which is unsuitable to it, —

whether light or serious, the humblest or the most exalted. Second, that, being short, it occupies so much the less time either in reading or composing. Third, that its brevity adds to its force, and so makes it the easier to remember. Fourth, that, being restricted to certain limits, a sonnet complete in other respects, is of necessity complete in all, and thus gratifies the workman with a consciousness of his having done something finished, however little; and, fifth and last, that a single sonnet, in consequence, may procure the writer a repute and even a duration — as will be seen in the course of this volume — which circumstances beyond his control might otherwise have put out of the question.

Every mood of mind can be indulged in a sonnet; every kind of reader appealed to. You can make love in a sonnet, you can laugh in a sonnet, you can lament in it, can narrate or describe, can rebuke, can admire, can pray. One of the most affecting sonnets of Petrarca is a prayer to God for pardon of his lost time. Dante, when he was young, and before strife had embittered his feelings, left, in a sonnet, a model for the expression of love. In sonnets Petrarca and Alfieri denounced the vices of the Papal court. In sonnets the "great Filicaia" — as Wordsworth called him — mourned the beauty that attracted invaders to Italy, and the sloth and effeminacy that would not repel them. In sonnets Berni satirized, and Casti harmlessly jested, and English poets wrote as we have seen Wordsworth describe them, and Wordsworth himself has obtained by no means the least part of his fame. Indeed, all the sonnets to which allusion has thus been made are famous in their own countries, if not throughout the world, — some of them known wherever a language of Europe is spoken.

Our essay, then, may enter into some details on the subject, not only without the fear of being thought frivolous, but with the confidence derivable from these great names, and with the enjoyment which such companionship naturally tends to produce.

II.

OF THE NATURE AND PROPERTIES OF THE SONNET, PARTICULARLY THE SONNET CALLED LEGITIMATE.

THE little species of poem called a sonnet, which is limited in general to fourteen lines, and is rhymed and arranged according to particular laws, made its first known appearance at the beginning of the twelfth century, and in Italy. Like almost all the forms of Italian poetry, it is supposed to have originated in Provence; and it derived its name, like the composition called a *Sonata*, from being *sounded* or played; that is to say, accompanied by a musical instrument. To *sound*, in Italian, still means to play music; and the sonnet, of old, was never without such accompaniment. The *Canzone*, or *Ode*, like the *Canzonetta*, or *Song*, — the *Chanson* and *Chansonette* of the French, — might be chanted, or sung, with the voice only; and so might the *Canto*, or division, of the narrative poem; as was the case with the stanzas of Tasso, that were sung up to a late period by the Venetian gondolier. The *Ballata*, or ballad, — from *ballare*, to dance, whence our word Ball, — a species of song, the name of which has strangely wandered from its first meaning, might be danced to, also with the voice only.

The *Madrigal*, sometimes called *Madriale*, or *Mandriale*, a small, irregular set of verses, often of the briefest and humblest description, and so named, according to the received opinion, from *Mandra*, or *Mandria*, a sheepfold, but more probably, I conceive, from the song of the *mother* (madre), or nursery song, implied nothing directly musical either way; though it subsequently came to mean a particular species of vocal composition in parts. But the sonnet, agreeably to its appellation, was never heard without the sounding of the lute or the guitar. This connection, as we shall see, lasted a long time; and when it ceased, it left upon the little poem a demand for treatment more than commonly musical, and implying, so to speak, the companion which it had lost.

When I first began this Essay, I had entered more at large into these and other matters relative to the name and rise of the sonnet; such as a late etymology from the French word *Sonnette*, a sheep-bell; the strange, pedantic question, whether the species of poem originated in the Pindaric Ode, or in the Greek or Latin Epigram, things either too long or too short, and quite out of the beat of its early writers; the demand of a certain logical mode of treatment, which it was long the fashion to consider indispensably necessary; and, lastly, certain recondite musical analogies, which a late enthusiast on the subject, Mr. Capel Lofft, found between its fourteen lines and the gamut.

Two of these points, however, are scarcely worth the mention here given them; and the other two, which contain germs of truth, may be briefly despatched.

The fourteen lines of the Sonnet Proper, or what is called the Legitimate Sonnet, that is to say, the one

written according to the laws which have prevailed in Italy ever since the time of Petrarca, are divided into two distinct portions, Major and Minor, each of which is subdivided into two also. The Major division consists of eight lines, called the *Octave*, which possesses but two rhymes; the Minor, of six lines, called the *Sestette*, which possesses never more than three; and the subdivisions or halves of these eight lines are called *Quatrains*, and those of the six lines *Terzettes*. The two rhymes of the Major division almost invariably occupy the same places; the two or three rhymes of the Minor may be varied at pleasure, but seldom close with a couplet.

A few glances, however, at the sonnets themselves will be worth a hundred directions of this kind; only the student is to bear in mind, that the music of the lines is to be at once as sweet and as strong and as varied as possible, and that there should be something of a difference of tone discernible in the Major and Minor portions, as there is in the divisions of music so called, or in the two strains of an air or melody.

The logical notion of the treatment of this construction of verse arose in the times when Aristotle and the schoolmen were all in all with men of letters; and it was probably not unassisted by the musical instinct which perceives questions, and replies, and solutions, in tones and cadences. The musical notion, as pushed to its excess by Mr. Lofft,* would appear to have been suggested to him by his confusion of Friar Guittone of Arezzo, who is understood to have first given the sonnet its right modulation, with another Friar of the same

* In his collection of sonnets entitled "Laura," Vol. I., Preface, p. v.

name and place, who flourished a long time before him, and who was supposed to be the inventor of counterpoint.

The logical notion prevailed so long with critics of a certain scholarly and conventional turn of mind, that, so late as towards the middle of the last century, Quadrio, one of the most distinguished of them, tells us, that "the business of the first quatrain of the sonnet is to state the proposition of it; of the second quatrain to prove the proposition; of the first terzette to confirm it, and of the second terzette to draw the conclusion;* and the good Father Ceva, in his selection of pieces of this kind for the use of schools, likens the sonnet to a syllogism, in which, if the conclusion is not strictly drawn from the premises, the whole is a mere play of words and of rhymes.†

That such a system could never prevail over the manifest temptations to be more free and easy, need hardly be observed. The sonnet was too obvious a resource for expressing any emotion whatsoever, to be restricted to formalities so pedantic; and accordingly it finally obeyed no laws in general but those that are essential to all good poetry, with the exception of such as were necessary to render it what it was, and to secure for it that completeness, and that freedom from blemish, which alone can render a small thing precious.

On the other hand, it would be rash to affirm that logic had no involuntary concern, or music no artistical concern, in forming the sonnet. There is an instinct of music in every kind of verse; and there is, or ought to

* Della Storia e della Ragione d' Ogni Poesia, (Milano, 1742,) Tom. III. p. 16.

† Scelta di Sonetti, (Torino, 1735,) p. 42.

be, a beginning, a middle, and an end in every kind of composition. Reason must naturally reason, and emotion speak, as well and consistently as it can; and music is only emotion singing. The poets who flourished while the sonnet was maturing were all, more or less, musicians as well as poets; the minstrels, their predecessors, had invariably, in the first instance, written both the words and the music of their compositions, though the tasks gradually became divided; but every poet played on the lute or guitar; every poet accompanied his chant or his recitation with it; and the more musical the poet, the more he would feel the musical capabilities of what he composed. One improvement in this respect would produce another; verses, like musical bars, would be found to have their claims on variety of accent and pause; and final satisfaction of the ear might, naturally enough, suggest the settlement of a determinate amount of size in the sum total. Theories on such points may be pushed to extremes by enthusiasts, and niceties of intention be attributed where they did not exist; but as verse itself is often written without a knowledge of prosody, and music itself composed with little insight into the subtleties of its grammar, so feeling alone might have suggested those analogies of majors and minors, of tones, modulations, cadences, and harmonical progressions, the reality of which in sonnets of masterly execution will be admitted, more or less, by every good ear which is not unacquainted with the terms of the musical art.

A sonnet is, in fact, or ought to be, a piece of music as well as of poetry; and as every lover of music is sensible of the division even of the smallest air into two

parts, the second of which is the consequent or necessary demand of the first; and as these parts consist of phrases and cadences, which have similar sequences and demands of their own, so the composition called a sonnet, being a long air or melody, becomes naturally divided into two different strains, each of which is subdivided in like manner; and as quatrains constitute the one strain, and terzettes the other, we are to suppose this kind of musical demand the reason why the limitation to fourteen lines became, not a rule without a reason, but an harmonious necessity.

Readers, however, who may wish to write sonnets at once, notwithstanding they may have had little acquaintance with the art, are not bound to think of all which is here said, or of any portion of it, till the interest they take in their work incite them to do so. Ear and other qualifications may suffice them to begin, — may suffice them always, if excellent; though, in that case, the more they can do, the more they will wish to know what can be done. The greatest poets, as we shall see presently, even in regard to a sonnet, have ever been the greatest students of their art. I do not say that lesser poets, far lesser, cannot study it too. All I say is, that the greatest poets invariably study it; and with results of course in proportion.

The majority of the persons who look into this book will be no "scorners" of sonnets; perhaps none of them will; but should such a person be among them, the following summary of the conditions requisite to a perfect sonnet may show him what he has undertaken to scorn. For a sonnet, like everything else, is to be judged according to what properly and thoroughly constitutes it, and

not from specimens that fall short of its requirements. The student need not be alarmed by the summary. Perfection, as a *sine qua non*, is to be demanded of nobody; and many a sonnet has lasted and been found beautiful, that had no pretensions to it. Still perfection is to be aimed at: it has often, in this small shape, been realized; points of it may be attained, if not all; some points must be always attempted, such as unforced rhymes, and unsuperfluous words; and the student will do well always to bear in mind what has been said by a critic not given to the sentimental, — that "one sonnet without a fault is alone worth a long poem." *

The sonnet, then, in order to be a perfect work of art, and no compromise with a difficulty, must in the first place be a Legitimate Sonnet after the proper Italian fashion; that is to say, with but two rhymes to the octave, and not more than three in the sestette.

Secondly, it must confine itself to one leading idea, thought, or feeling.

Thirdly, it must treat this one leading idea, thought, or feeling in such a manner as to leave in the reader's mind no sense of irrelevancy or insufficiency.

Fourthly, it must not have a speck of obscurity.

Fifthly, it must not have a forced rhyme.

Sixthly, it must not have a superfluous word.

Seventhly, it must not have a word too little; that is to say, an omission of a word or words, for the sake of convenience.

Eighthly, it must not have a word out of its place.

Ninthly, it must have no very long word, or any

* "Un sonnet sans défaut vaut seul un long poëme."
BOILEAU.

other that tends to lessen the number of accents, and so weaken the verse.

Tenthly, its rhymes must be properly varied and contrasted, and not beat upon the same vowel, — a fault too common with very good sonnets. It must not say, for instance, *rhyme, tide, abide, crime;* or *play, gain, refrain, way;* but contrast *i* with *o*, or with some other strongly opposed vowel, and treat every vowel on the same principle.

Eleventhly, its music, throughout, must be as varied as it is suitable; more or less strong, or sweet, according to the subject; but never weak or monotonous, unless monotony itself be the effect intended.

Twelfthly, it must increase, or, at all events, not decline, in interest, to its close.

Lastly, the close must be equally impressive and unaffected; not epigrammatic, unless where the subject warrants it, or where point of that kind is desirable; but simple, conclusive, and satisfactory; strength being paramount, where such elevation is natural, otherwise on a level with the serenity; flowing in calmness, or grand in the manifestation of power withheld.

Go now, you who undertook to scorn the sonnet, and see if you had not better have made made yourself a little more acquainted with what you scorned.

III.

OF GUITTONE D' AREZZO, AND OF THE SONNETS OF DANTE AND PETRARCA.

MENTION has been made, in the preceding section, of a certain Friar Guittone of Arezzo, who is believed to have been the first to give the sonnet its right workmanlike treatment and versification. Mr. Lofft, in the third volume of his "Laura" (Sonnet 158), has selected a most extraordinary effusion of the Reverend Brother, for the purpose of appending to it the gamut supposed to have been invented by the Friar, his namesake, and of showing the musical accord of the verses therewith. The sonnet has a tremendous accompaniment of its own; no less, namely, than the trumpet of the Day of Judgment, which the good Brother says he shall be "delighted to hear," together with the awful words that ensue, because the Creator will then see, by his countenance, how he, Friar Guittone, has always loved Him! Not a word is added of pity for those who had not been so pious. Such is not the occasion which other lovers of the Divine Being — St. Francis de Sales, for instance, or Bishop Berkeley, or Dr. Doddridge — would have selected for manifesting this kind of superiority over their fellow-creatures. And

yet this same Friar — so great is the difference between what a man actually feels and what he thinks he could feel — has left a veritably tender as well as elegant sonnet on the subject of human love, which accords with the opinion entertained of him as the harbinger of good sonneting.

Guittone d' Arezzo was followed by the tender Cino da Pistoia, by the noble-minded Guido Cavalcante, and by their great friend Dante Alighieri, who, with the graceful Guido Guinicelli and the others, carried to philosophical heights of refinement those efforts of the brain which the Provençal poets were in the habit of substituting for effusions of the heart; but these transcendentalisms were accompanied with a sensibility and a pathos which not only exonerated the Italians from the charge of a like mistake, but confirmed those demands of real feeling in the sonnet, and in amatory poetry in general, which were soon to be diffused throughout the civilized world by the fame of Petrarca.

Nor is it to be denied, we think, that, as far as feeling and expression are concerned, to say nothing of imagination, the sonnet, in the hands of Dante, reached a perfection which Petrarca himself did not attain. Dante, when religious or political fanaticism did not lower him into one of the most melancholy spectacles on earth, — that of a great understanding overmastered by a violent will, — could be not only a profound thinker and observer, but tender and affectionate in the extremest degree. In imagination, which is the highest requisite of poetry, he surpassed perhaps every other poet in the world, before or since, — certainly was by none surpassed; and if this, in so proud, presumptuous, and irascible a man, says lit-

tle for the exaltation of poetry itself in comparison with philosophy, — for who supposes Plato and Socrates to have been slaves to such infirmities? — it says nothing — anticlimax apart — against the all-embracing little sonnet, in which a man may show what humors he pleases, provided he show them in a poetical manner. Dante, accordingly, has cursed as well as blessed in his sonnets; while in the very earliest of them, written before he was out of his teens, he gave promise of that rare and intense imagination of which he was afterwards so profuse. Had he written indeed as many poems of this kind, or half as many, as his illustrious successor in this line, and thoroughly applied his faculties to the task, it is to be doubted whether he, instead of Petrarca, would not have set the pattern of the sonnet to succeeding ages, and elevated the nature of its demands besides.

For next to the unquestionable superiority in the highest respect of one of these renowned poets over the other, that of Dante in the Sonnet — as appears to me — was the very important one of grace over elegance; that is to say, of the inner spirit of the beautiful over the outer; of unstudied, as opposed to studied effect; of sentiment expressing itself wholly for its own sake, contrasted with sentiment selecting its words for the sake of the words also.

Not that Petrarca had no grace. Far was he from any such nullity. He had a great deal of grace, but not so much in distinction from the critical sense of it; not such reliance upon it, apart from the aid to be given it by the accomplishments of style. Petrarca has frequent instances, not only of grace, but of passion; to say

nothing of the most exalted mind. But he lived in an age of less trouble and more literature than Dante, was more prosperous and in favor, and was also of a nature less given to extremes; so that his poetry, like his life, was altogether of a more equable description; and hence a difference in it from Dante's, which, if it rendered it not so great, left it still greatly beautiful, and, till society itself became stirred up and impassioned with new revolutions, more popular.

Petrarca has been pronounced monotonous. His subject, no doubt, is monotonous; and it is easy to give a few glances at him and lay him aside under that impression. But how is it that the world has listened to him so long? Ladies, too, may be thought to know something of this matter; and they are all in his favor. Ladies of no great turn for monotony in love have expressly admired him for his variations on that theme; and sentimental ladies have found him as charming in the nineteenth century as he was in the fourteenth. Nor are the other sex, whose good-will he has not so bespoken, less fervid in their extolments. Throughout the whole series of Italian poets, not excepting his fault-finder Tassoni, his praises are constantly sounding; and two of the latest and manliest of them — Alfieri and Foscolo — worshipped the ground he trod on. A reign of five hundred years over the most poetical and musical of countries, with all Europe for its echo, is surely answer enough to a charge of monotony.*

It is to be acknowledged, however, that you must

* See Alfieri's Sonnets; Foscolo's Letters of Ortis; Madame de Genlis's Petrarch and Laura; and the Margravine of Anspach's Memoirs. We quote them all from memory.

listen closely, and that the more you know of his language, the more you will find it varied.

What Petrarca did for the sonnet, for its readers, and for his own special renown, as its exemplar, was, first, to free it from the crudities and metaphysics of preceding times, which the lyrical poetry of Dante himself had not thoroughly outgrown; second, to give it a music superior to Dante's; third, besides beauties of style and modulation obvious to all, to give it others, of which his countrymen only are thoroughly qualified to speak, and of which they always speak with delight; and fourth, to render the sonnet so popular by its abundance, such a favorite with women by its life-long praises of one object, and so welcome to the best of their lovers for the dignity of the author's character and his exaltation of the passion, that it necessitated a like refinement in the love-making of his countrymen in general; and thus did a good to Italy, which war, a ferocious libertinism, and the sensuousness natural to the South, might have withheld from it for ages. It was on these accounts, that Petrarca's lesser, though beautiful genius, being brought nearer to our common earth by the revolutions of time and feeling, eclipsed that of the mightier star, Dante, up to a period as late as the present century. And for reasons greater than all others, this last consequence in particular appears to me to have been fortunate, — I would dare to say providential, if I might presume to look into secrets so great; for there was a baneful side of the star, the influence of which it was desirable to arrest, till it could be neutralized by less superstitious times.

As to the conceits which Petrarca is accused of mingling with his better thoughts, and so leaving them for

false lights to his successors, such as his antitheses of burning in ice and freezing in fire, his hyperbolical comparisons of his mistress with angels and stars and suns, and his punning identifications of her name with *Laurel* and with *the air*,—*L'Aura*,—the charge must be allowed to be true, as far as the indulgence in them became a habit, and so procured them an undue amount of attention; otherwise I would venture to suggest, that, however critically objectionable on these, or on any strictly poetical accounts, they are not so untrue to nature as lovers less enthusiastic suppose; nor would such a lover as Petrarca have been thoroughly true to his passion, had he altogether omitted them. All young, excessive, and idealizing love speaks or thinks occasionally, more or less, in the same manner. All the love of the South and of the East talked so, and had talked so, long before the time of Petrarca. Romeo and Juliet talked so; and so, in all probability, did Shakespeare himself, when he was a youth in his teens, to Anne Hathaway, and very much astonished the daughter of the "substantial yeoman." Young Dante talked so and *looked* so to Beatrice; and got laughed at for his pains. Even Ariosto, a sensuous lover in comparison with these, and famous for his being a natural writer, was not without such talk in his *Furioso*. So long as conceits are natural to passion, they will be vindicable under certain states of feeling in poetry; and Petrarca's love was so impassioned that, as in known instances of optical delusion, in certain ultra-sensitive conditions of the brain, there is reason to believe that he sometimes visibly beheld the image of his mistress before him; and this not only at night-time, but even in solitudes by day. How then are we to wonder

that he discerned shadows and intimations of her in the wavings of trees, in outlines of the very rocks, in sunlight and starlight, in the name of the Laurel that was to bind his brows, or in that of the air, — *L'Aura*, — which was his life and breath? He sometimes even feared what he had seen, and "shivered" in the midst of the wonder and fever of his thoughts. This was no "cold" passion; and the only just objection that can be made to such expressions is the one implied by that epithet; which in the instance, therefore, of Petrarca is unjust.

"If a thing is worth doing at all," said Johnson, "it is worth doing well." To show the respect which the great poet Dante had for the making of a sonnet, and the attention which this other of the four great poets of Italy thought proper to bestow on its association with music, I shall conclude the present section with one or two small but curious passages out of the "Early Life" — *Vita Nuova* — of the former, and a larger one, very curious, from the "Essays on Petrarch," by Ugo Foscolo.

"This sonnet," says Dante, speaking of the one beginning,

"Tutti li miei pensier parlan d'amore,"

"may be divided into three parts. In the first, I lay down the proposition that all my thoughts are of love. In the second, I say that they are discordant, and state this discrepancy. In the third, I mention that in which they all agree," &c.

Of another sonnet, — the one beginning,

"Ciò che m' incontra nella mente mora," —

he says, in like manner: —

"This sonnet is divided into two parts. In the first,

I state the reason why I forbear approaching my lady. In the second, I relate what befalls me when I approach her. This second part is subdivided into five different subjects," &c.

Dante notices also, in his treatise on the "Vernacular Tongue," — *De Vulgari Eloquio*, — the minutest requirements of various forms of metrical composition. It is a great mistake to suppose, that, in proportion as a poet is inspired by nature, he cares nothing for the help of art. On the contrary, it may be asserted, that, the greater his inspiration, the greater is his respect for the means through which he is to convey it, — the greater his study of language, of metre, of words. Dante was as great a critic for his time as he was a poet for all time. Spenser wrote a treatise on poetry, which is unfortunately lost; and Milton could have given a critical and musical reason for every verse which he uttered. To suppose the contrary, is to suppose that Beethoven and Paesiello were not as deep in the grammar of their art as professors who can do nothing but teach it; that Raphael could not have given a reason for every line which his knowledge of anatomy rendered true, or Titian for every color which he studied in cheek or landscape.

Now hear the great sonnet-minstrel, Petrarca, recording his experiments with his verses on his lute. But first hear how they are introduced to us by his poetical critic, Foscolo. Cultivators of the sonnet are not to be daunted by them. The lute and the sonnet are no longer married, — no longer even acquainted, — though, on occasion, it is to be hoped they may be. It would be pleasant to hear a good animated sonnet chanted, or

otherwise musically impressed on us, by fervid accompaniments of lute or guitar.

"Little," says Foscolo, "as the *Sonetti* and *Canzoni* may appear to our modern composers of operas to be susceptible of music, it is not on that account the less true that these terms are derived from *Suono* and *Canto*, and that poets often added notes of music to their stanzas. In the manuscripts, which are still preserved at Florence, of Franco Sachetti and other contemporaries of Petrarch,* the following note is to be found at the head of some of their sonnets: '*Intonatum per Francum:— Scriptor dedit sonum.*' † The system of Italian music by counterpoint had been created three centuries before their age by Guido d' Arezzo; and it is only in our days that it has been refined and complicated by the followers of the German school. Poetry was not then in Italy the mere *caput mortuum* of music; and the human voice, instead of being a subordinate accessory to the orchestra, filled the most prominent part, and was accompanied by inanimate instruments only so far as was necessary to support it, and to regulate its modifications. The words might then strike the ear with less astonishment than the tunes, but they spoke more forcibly to the heart, and more usefully to the mind. Petrarch poured forth his

* It may be thought strange to see an Italian writing the poet's name in this old English way, and an Englishman writing it like an Italian; but Foscolo's spelling was the polite concession of a guest to the country which he had made his home; and it is high time to follow the example of Roscoe and others in writing the word correctly. We no longer say *Boccace* instead of *Boccaccio*. Why should we deteriorate the name of his friend?

† "Sung or chanted by Franco; the writer gave the air." Franco was not Sacchetti, but a celebrated singer of the time.

verses to the sound of his lute, which he bequeathed in his will to a friend; and his voice was sweet, flexible, and of great compass. All the love-poetry of his predecessors, except that of Cino, wants sweetness of numbers; but the sweetness of Petrarch is enlivened with a variety, a rapidity, and a glow, which no Italian lyric has ever possessed in an equal degree."

And again, in a passage which must have seemed very remarkable to such readers as had been in the habit of considering a sonnet a trifle, Foscolo gives us the following "literal translation of a succession of memorandums" at the head of one of the sonnets that were thus "intoned":—

"'I began this,' says Petrarch, 'by the impulse of the Lord — *Domino jubente* — 10th September, at the dawn of day, *after my morning prayers.*'

"'I must make these two verses over again, singing them — *cantando*; — and I must transpose them. 3 o'clock, A. M., 19th October.'

"'I like this — *hoc placet.* 30th October, 10 o'clock in the morning.'

"'No: this does not please me. 20th December, in the evening.'

"And in the midst of his corrections," continues Foscolo, "he writes, on laying down his pen, 'I shall return to this again; I am called to supper.'

"'February 18th. Towards noon. This is now well: — however, look at it again — *vide tamen adhuc.*'

"Sometimes he notes the town where he happens to be: — '1364, *Veneris Mane*, 19 Jan. *dum invitus Patavii ferior.*'* It might seem rather a curious than useful

* "Friday Morning. — While idling against my will in Padua."

remark, that it was generally on Friday that he occupied himself with the painful labor of correction, did we not also know that it was to him a day of fast and penitence.*

"When any thought occurred to him, he noted it in the midst of his verses, thus: —

"'Consider this.—I had some thoughts of transposing these lines, and of making the first verse the last, but I have not done so for the sake of harmony. The first would then be more sonorous, and the last less so, which is against rule; for the end should be more harmonious than the beginning.'

"Sometimes he says: 'The commencement is good, but it is not pathetic enough.' In some places he suggests to himself to repeat the same words rather than the same ideas. In others he judges it better not to multiply the ideas, but to amplify them with other expressions. Every verse is turned in several different ways; above each phrase and each word he frequently places equivalent expressions, in order to examine them again; and it requires a profound knowledge of Italian to perceive, that, after such perplexing scruples, he always adopts those words which combine at once most harmony, elegance, and energy."†

Petrarca's lyric poems, which are chiefly sonnets to the amount of more than three hundred, were written during the course of thirty-two years; so that he had plenty of

* Did he call this "idling"? or was he speaking only of his stay in Padua altogether?

† Ugo Foscolo, Essays on Petrarch, (1823,) p. 90 and p. 57. Foscolo was wrong, in common with all the world, in attributing the invention of counterpoint to Guittone d'Arezzo; as the reader may see in the *Biographie Universelle des Musiciens* by the most learned of musical critics, M. Fetis.

time before him, though he was otherwise an industrious writer and voluminous correspondent. But he would let a sonnet lie polishing at leisure in his mind for months together, like a pebble on the sea-shore.

Cannot others, no less busy, have their sonnet polishing too? The cigar will not hinder it; and the doctor will not quarrel with it, as he does sometimes with the cigar.

IV.

OF THE OTHER PRINCIPAL SONNET-WRITERS OF ITALY.

FOR a considerable time after the death of Petrarca, few sonnets but his own appear to have been heard from the lutes of poets. Emulation of them was thought so hopeless, that imitation itself became daunted. Literary ambition, too, at that period was turned into new directions by the novels of Petrarca's friend Boccaccio, by the increasing discoveries of ancient classics, by the substitution of the Greek language itself for transferences of its authors through Arabic and Latin versions, and lastly, by the disturbed condition of Italy in Church and State, the rise of petty sovereignties, and the downfall of republics. It was not till near a century from the time of Petrarca's being in flower with his sonnets, that the first regular crop of imitations of them made its appearance in those of a Roman gentleman of the name of Giusto de' Conti, who collected them under the title of "The Beautiful Hand," — *La Bella Mano.*

I would fain have discovered some merit in this earliest and not least enthusiastic imitator of the great sonnetteer; but I can only mention and dismiss him, as the type of all the poet's imitators; who, whatever

may have been their popularity for a time, owing to the absolute passion of Italy for this kind of writing, lost it, as sheer matter of superfluity, when they had nothing else to distinguish them from the crowds by whom they were emulated. Every one of these gentlemen sighed and died to such an excess for some Laura-like idol, who was at once the sweetest and cruellest of her sex, that you wonder they did not all burst out a-laughing some morning, by one common impulse, at the ridiculous figure they were making; as indeed now and then the critics did for them. Fortunately, the ladies whom they addressed are understood, for the most part, to have laughed in self-defence; for what were common mortals to say to adulations that took them out of the category of humanity, and rendered it ridiculous in them to eat their figs and maccaroni? The title of Giusto's book is not a mere title. The beautiful Hand which he worshipped forms the main subject of it; and the reader may judge what a small source of inspiration a lover must own to, when he represents a hand, however beautiful, as the main cause of his passion. You seem never to see the lady's face, — though he mentions that also, — or to think it can be worth seeing. Giusto sighs, and weeps, and talks of his miseries and his grave, like the rest of his despairing brethren, and it is all owing to this "Beautiful Hand"; which he represents as so unspeakably cruel and tormenting, and as giving such dreadful squeezes and grips to his heart, that you begin to think there is something as bad in it as in the beautiful hand of Madame de Brinvilliers, which was in the habit of despatching people out of the world with poison.

Giusto died in the year 1449 ; and in the year preceding was born the first writer of sonnets, after Petrarca, that combined with a coloring from that poet an impulse and character of his own. This was no less a person than Lorenzo de' Medici, — a man to whose abilities and accomplishments, as an advancer of the accomplishments of others, as a statesman, social philosopher, wit, and poet, I cannot think that justice has yet been done. His biographers, notwithstanding their elegance and their good-will, appear to have wanted both depth of insight and sufficient animal spirits for the task. To-day this extraordinary person was communing with Plato, and to-morrow dancing with his fellow-citizens : to-day ruling the state, — a very difficult state to rule, — to-morrow laying down the laws of a sonnet : to-day patronizing Politian or Michael Angelo, to-morrow testing the accounts of his factors, enjoying a cargo of antiques and new books, making merry with Pulci, discussing philosophy with Ficinus, originating a new form of satire or species of pastoral, or corresponding with popes and kings, and arbitrating the affairs of all Italy.

But the Sonnet is the business of this book ; and we must not be tempted to dilate on the collateral merits of its writers.

The sonnets of Lorenzo for the most part betray, it must be confessed, the too common misfortune of almost all the writers of sonnets in Italy ; they are injured by the fact of their being imitations : otherwise the style natural to him is so racy, and some of them exhibit so much of it, that it is evident he might have been as charming a model in this class of poetry as he was of

the pastoral above intimated, or of the songs for people to dance to on the First of May.*

I have given this distinguished writer of sonnets precedence in point of time to another, who was born fourteen years earlier, but who does not appear to have made his productions known so soon to the world. This was Boiardo, author of the *Orlando Innamorato*, — a poet whose singular good fortune it is delightful to contemplate; for he was rich, noble, prosperous, cheerful, admired, and beloved. His sonnets partake of Petrarca's, like the rest, and he devotes the requisite portion of them to sighs and tears, not without intimation that these clouds were but sets-off to his sunshine. The remainder are so much of a piece with the prosperity of his life, that they are remarkable for a brightness like that of glad

* I allude to the May Songs in the editions of his works devoted wholly to himself, and not to those in the carnival-song collections, which may or may not be his, and which I have heard charged with licentiousness, — I have never happened to see them. — The manners in Lorenzo's time were much freer than in ours, and its writers are to be judged accordingly; nor are the edited works above mentioned exempt from objection in passages. With respect to Lorenzo's maintenance of the power of his house in Florence, — which, having said so much of him, I feel bound, as a lover of liberty, to notice, — my conscientious opinion of it is, after a close perusal of Napier's Florentine History, — himself a lover of liberty, and an honest denouncer of Lorenzo, — that the turbulent and ever-quarrelling Florentines had never understood real liberty, or cared for it; that, next to merchandise, and a good deal of ordinary enjoyment, little but a struggle for power was ever going on among them; that Lorenzo, great man as he was, and a lover of the prosperity of all classes, was not himself great enough to be the founder of the highest kind of free state, but thought that, as some Florentine house or other must finally rule, his own had better be that house, both for self-interest's sake and the people's.

eyes, and for a sweetness amounting to the honeyed. His style has been accused of being a little too off-hand and colloquial; but this, which Ginguené seems to think incompatible with elegance, and which Boiardo's countryman Panizzi justly thinks otherwise, — or perhaps it should rather be said, with grace, — only serves to complete the charm of its felicity by testifying to its truth. The poet was a Lombard, and often spoke as happily in his Lombardisms as Homer and Chapman did in provincialisms of Greece and England.

The *Orlando Innamorato* is one of the four great poetic romances of Italy: the *Morgante Maggiore* of Lorenzo's friend Pulci, which appeared a little before it, is another. The natural idiomatic style of these poets, without putting an end to the worship of the common idol, caused unintentionally a reaction against the style of Petrarca, and this reaction was so increased by the influences of wars and commerce, which enriched uneducated men, and raised peasants and common soldiers to princely power, that, about thirty years after the production of the sonnets of Boiardo, Bembo, subsequently cardinal, an accomplished philologist, who like Petrarca had been bred in courts, and who, though a Venetian, had been much in Florence and fallen in love with the elegances of the Tuscan poet, set all his wits to the restoration of the latter's authority, — an enterprise in which he succeeded so fatally to himself, that his quondam fame as a Petrarchist of genius is now degraded into that of having been a servile imitator. The little spark of originality within him occasionally shows itself; but you are forced — as Pulci might have said — to poke at it and blow it up, like a spark in ashes.

Had Bembo's friend Ariosto written many sonnets, the world might have possessed a new Petrarca; not as spiritual indeed as the other, for the sensuousness of his temperament was too strong for Platonizing, but of a kind thoroughly new and peculiar. Ariosto's sonnets are few for an Italian poet, — not more than six and thirty, — and they are not without tributes of imitation to the lover of Laura; but one of them at least is full of character, and his passion, for the most part, is anything but sighs and groans.

It was to a poet of far less fame, but of a nature not unallied to Ariosto's in wit and sense, that the Italians attribute the first great innovation on the Petrarcal pattern of sonnet, — the first variation upon his theme and upon his music. This was another friend of Bembo's, and a third ecclesiastic, — for Ariosto himself was an ecclesiastic, — namely, Giovanni della Casa, who became an Archbishop, and, it is believed, would have been a Cardinal had it not been for some licentious poems which he wrote in his youth, and which his rivals persisted in keeping before the Papal memory. Casa was author of the well-written and estimable book on manners, entitled *Galateo*, and also of the pleasant and innocent banter on the name of John, — his own, — which some of the readers of this Essay may have seen translated, and which was made another ground of objection to his preferment, because John was a name in Scripture! You might be an Archbishop and have joked about John, but you must not be a Cardinal! At such gnats was the Papal throat made to strain, while it swallowed camels, by the dozen, of nepotisms and bad faith.

The great, and what was at first thought audacious,

innovations of Casa upon the authority of Petrarca, or rather upon the received system of the Petrarcists, consisted in his breaking up the flow of his lines, and introducing words and thoughts more remarkable for their strength than sweetness. He went so far — which Petrarca did very rarely — as to run the quatrains into one another and even into the terzettes; and though faithful to the system in some respects, seemed to take a delight in being as heterodox in others as possible, and caring for nothing but venting his rugged good sense. Tasso, who rebukes imitators for copying only the harshness of Casa, praises him for the more exalted qualities of expression, imagination, and grandeur. He admired him so much as to devote a whole lecture to a single one of his sonnets, — no unusual honor paid by poets in those days to sonnets, but seldom by such a poet as the author of the "Jerusalem Delivered."*

Contemporary with Casa, and a successful innovator in another direction, was Angelo di Costanzo, an historian of his country, Naples. Costanzo took pains to restore the logical system of sonnet which prevailed before the time of Petrarca, adding to it an amount of feeling which neither that poet nor Dante might have disdained, but too frequently spoiling all with elaborate conceits and cold epigrammatical conclusions. Thus he argues in one of them, that the sight of his mistress being at once delightful and killing, it follows that, although death is the worst of losses, there is a loss worse than death itself. And in another, finding it impossible

* The Lecture is to be found both in Tasso's works, collected by Professor Rosini, and in those of Casa himself, as published at Venice in the year 1728, vol. i. p. 339.

to live without seeing his mistress, however angrily she looks upon him, he makes up his mind to the interview, because it is "better to be deprived of one eye than to become wholly blind." Yet these puerilities were admired not only in his own time, and long afterwards, but as late as the continuation of Ginguené's "Literary History of Italy," by Salfi, who has seldom shown his inferiority to his predecessor so strongly. Ginguené himself, who for the most part is a very discerning as well as engaging critic, was sometimes, notwithstanding his ridicules of bad taste, inclined to push his liberality too far in the indulgences of whimsical conceits, and triflings with reflection; but he would not have eulogized, with Salfi, the studied logical sequences and insipid surprises of Costanzo.* And yet, towards the close of his sonnets, this same poet, moved by the death of one of his sons, opens such a real vein of unaffectedness and pathos, that I felt inclined to beg his pardon for all which I had been thinking to his disadvantage. The laughter which his metaphysical love-sorrows had provoked ended in tears for the father. He has also left a beautiful ode on this subject; and one of his sonnets addressed to some distinguished writer shows Costanzo to have been not only a very modest man, but a right friend and gentleman. I begin to think, while writing this passage, that in some of his other sonnets he must have been jesting. In one of them he has condescended to imitate, if not banter, a strange compliment paid to a mistress by another writer of sonnets, — Antonio Broccardo. Costanzo tells his lady, that as she and he will

* *Histoire Littéraire d' Italie*, tom. ix. p. 344. Salfi himself makes an exception to the sonnet noticed by him at page 349.

certainly be condemned, both of them, to eternal punishment, he trusts that his torments will be rendered delightful to him — "dolci e gioconde" — by the sight of her face, which will then be divested of its pride; while, on the other hand, her sufferings will be tempered with the excess of the pleasure which she will feel in witnessing his "unparalleled misery." At the same time, however, he fears that, as they have both sinned in equal measure, — she for too little love, and he for too much, — their sentence, in order to equalize their punishment, will condemn them to undergo it in quarters remote from one another! The only thing which Salfi appears to object to this sonnet, besides its want of originality, is the look of inconsistency between the delight of the poet's torments and their unequalled wretchedness. Muratori, as he observes, has no fault to find with it, except that it is hardly proper in a lover, under any circumstances, to suppose his lady in Hell!

I have dwelt a little longer than I intended on the sonnets of this writer, in order to show how an infection of bad taste may reach both to good poets and good critics; for Salfi, upon the whole, is not unworthy of Ginguené; and Muratori, though a Petrarcist in excess, too easily pleased with his brother enthusiasts, and not profound enough to sound the depths of Dante, was in general an acute as well as learned critic, and worth hearing on most points relating to poetry.*

* Salfi refers to page 316 of the second volume of Muratori's *Perfetta Poesia.* In my copy of that work, — the Venetian edition of 1770, — the page is 244. I speak of the only work of Muratori's with which I am acquainted. Crescimbeni, another esteemed though ultra-laudatory critic, and inferior to Muratori, held Cos-

In the time of Costanzo flourished three ladies distinguished for their sonnets, though, unfortunately, not for the happiness due to their virtues. These were Vittoria Colonna, Marchioness of Pescara, who at the age of thirty was deprived of her husband in battle, and died his sorrowing widow at fifty-seven; her friend Veronica Gambara, another mourning widow, relict of Giberto, Lord of Correggio; and Gaspara Stampa, a Paduan of Milanese origin, who was deserted by her idol, a Count of Collalto, for another lady, and is said to have died in consequence. Her sonnets, the effusions of an evidently sincere and cordial woman, are full of loving complaints of the Count's infidelity. I possess engraved portraits both of her and of the gentleman; the one a face and bust worthy of such a woman; the other handsome too, intelligent, and soldier-like, — for he was a soldier, — but hard and imperious. A later tradition has been found, which says that she recovered her loss, and was happily married, — a very desirable and much wiser termination to a sorrowing love-story. Gaspara's sonnets, as I well remember, exhibit a nature qualified to enjoy existence thoroughly; and it is not difficult to suppose that a lover of like disposition would persuade her to do it justice.

The short and splendid, though not quite unequivocal career of Vittoria's husband, D'Avalos, Marquis of Pescara, who was a soldier and statesman actively concerned in the wars and intrigues of the Spanish succession to the

tanzo's sonnets in the highest estimation; and it is not improbable that he may have spoken the sentiments of his friends Zappi, Redi, and Filicaia. Salfi notices Crescimbeni's recommendation of the sonnets as models.

throne of Naples, served to throw a lustre like a perpetual sunset on the melodious sorrows and life-long devotions of his widow. Of the doubts of his integrity she evidently knew, or believed, nothing. In body, mind, and soul, he was considered by her as perfection; and she accordingly wrought her poetical tributes to his memory with an elaboration of elegance that, in spite of their acknowledged merits and tenderness, has been thought by some injurious to their perfection. The motive, however, makes all the difference between what is to be well or ill thought of such painstaking. The splendid memory, she thought, deserved a splendid monument; and her very modesty might have led her to undervalue a simpler expression of her grief. Besides, the tears do, in reality, beautifully break in, where, to the eyes of these critics, they sometimes appear least spontaneous.

In the effusions of the other worthy lady, Veronica Gambara, I do not find much individual character. But probably I have not seen them all.

Tasso, a great name, who follows these lesser lights in point of time, has left us sonnets that lie as thick as stars in his firmament; many of them faint enough, as if with his sickness or misfortune; but others, splendid and grand; much as what you might conceive Milton himself to have written, had he been an Italian of that age, and bred under the like circumstances; stately, self-reverencing, and with a pomp of music and color. In others again it is piteous to see how this pride is brought low by the calamities of disease and imprisonment. The twofold luxury of temperament, brought upon the poet by his genius and his Southern gardens, was occasionally too much for him, — enfeebled him for his adversity.

Tasso, however, though he had closely considered the subject, did nothing peculiar for the sonnet, as such, apart from the dignity conferred on it by his style. The best of his compositions of the kind, and of his other lyrical productions, his odes in particular, are worthy of him; and that contribution to the renown of the sonnet he justly thought enough.

Tasso, among his other luxuries, indulged himself in a few faults of exuberance and verbal trifling, even in his great poem; and these, and Costanzo's, and every other poet's, Italian and Spanish, that could administer to the enormity, were brought together in one stifling heap by another Neapolitan, the celebrated corrupter of Italian poetry, Marini; whose sonnets are almost as innumerable as his conceits. Marini — sometimes called Marino — was the greatest and most profuse master that ever appeared of all that is adulterate in false poetry. Imagine whatsoever is objected to in style or matter by the words floweriness, prettiness, tawdriness, affectation, antithesis, and glitter, and you have it all to an excess in Marini. Cowley's and Donne's worst condescensions to conceit were nothing to it, at least in point of number. Petrarca would have been astounded to see the not unnatural inclusion of such fancies in his own love, turned into an ostentatious and countless display of them, to the destruction of all passion and sentiment. The consistent inconsistences, — to use their own style, — of burning and freezing at one and the same time, of flying and pursuing, presence and absence, cruelty and kindness, and every other species of similarity and dissimilarity, the stars of eyes, mouths full of pearls and rubies, nets made of tresses, plays and

turns upon words, triflings with rhymes and echoes, splitting of straws, and riots in impossibilities, make a chaos more like a clatter of Bedlamites, than of men even stultifying themselves on purpose. What was a passing fancy in Tasso or Petrarca became in these writers an elaboration of nonsense. Shakespeare, catching from Southern poetry a whim in the collocation of words, through the medium of Sidney and Spenser, has a line in which he speaks, — and very allowably and pleasantly speaks, considering it is a line and no more, — of the

"Courtier's, scholar's, soldier's eye, tongue, sword."

The followers of Marini have whole sonnets full of this kind of underwriting; a term which they delight in literally warranting; as in the sonnets of one Domenico Vaniero: —

"M' arde, impiaga, ritien, squarcia, orta, e preme,
Foco, stral, nodo, artiglio, impeto, e peso."

Me burns, wounds, binds, rends, shocks, and presses,
Fire, dart, knot, talon, violence, and weight.*

A foolish critic of this school, Federigo Meninni, a name provocative of a pun, wrote a whole volume on

* Sir Philip Sidney, whose judgment had not come to its "years of discretion" when he wrote the *Arcadia*, has a whole sonnet of this kind in it, in which the system is carried to its utmost height of perverted ingenuity; as the reader may judge from the first quatrain: —

"Virtue, beauty, and speech did strike, wound, charm,
My heart, eyes, ears, with wonder, love, delight:
First, second, last, did bind, enforce, and arm
His works, shows, suits, with wit, grace, and vows' might," —

and so it goes on to the last, the series of nouns and verbs being all drawn out of one another in orderly consequence and dependence. The work is full of other imitations of the Italians, bad as well as

"Sonnet and Canzone," * in which all these absurdities are adduced as proofs of excellence. He comprises them in one general class of *arguzie*, or *points;* which he looks upon as the consummation of poetry; and in answer to Marini's objectors, quotes with triumph the applauses bestowed on that poet by his two most celebrated disciples, Preti and Achillini; one of whom said, that, if ancient writers could have seen his works, they would have hated their own in proportion as the times which they lived in had loved them. And Achillini, in a letter written to Marini, tells him, — not in jest, but in gravest sincerity, — that he is a greater poet than "any that was ever born, whether among Italians, or Latins, or Greeks, or Egyptians, or Arabs, or Chaldees, or Hebrews." Marini, however, thinking more of Jew brokers than of the fine poetry of David or the Prophets, did not like the word "Hebrews"; saying in displeasure, "Don't you know that I have no fancy for tinkering old pans?" He thought that everything old was to be considered inferior to his novelties.

Meninni, quoting a passage in which his idol speaks of "mortal fire burning the body, while the soul escapes eternal fire," bids us observe, that here "fire is similar yet dissimilar in the mortal and in the eternal relation,

good, especially in the metrical varieties of the verses in it. I must take this opportunity, however, of observing, that the good of the *Arcadia*, in every respect, far outweighs the bad. It has many passages of great beauty both of thought and expression, besides a curious story, managed with singular delicacy and refinement; and I must add, to the honor of the sex, that I never recommended the perusal of it to a woman who did not thank me for so doing.

* *Il Ritratto del Sonetto e della Canzone*, &c., &c. Venetia, 1678.

dissimilar in respect to body and to soul, and dissimilar also as regards burning by fire and escaping from it." And he adds a quotation from a sonnet of his own on the death of Adonis, in which having said, in allusion to the story of Cadmus, that "if life once issued from the teeth of a dragon, death is now enclosed in the teeth of a boar," he tells us that here is "similitude as to the teeth, and dissimilitude as to their being the teeth of a boar and of a dragon"; also "in issuing forth and in being enclosed," and finally, "in life and in death."

If history did not show us how absurd human beings and whole nations could become in greater instances, it would be difficult to believe that such nonsense could ever have been a national passion. Yet such it was, and for a long time; and, what is more surprising, the great exemplar of it was a man of genius, able to write true, and even noble poetry; nor were these followers of his, Preti and Achillini, without passages of a true vein. But agreeably to one of the sayings of their master, the disciples preferred "pleasing the living to pleasing the dead"; forgetting that the living would be dead in their turn, and the good repute of the pleasers die with them.

It was about twelve years after the death of Marini, that Milton, in the course of his tour in Italy, visited Manso, Marquis of Villa, the patron of that poet and of Tasso. Milton in the beautiful Latin poem with which he repaid the civilities of Manso, seems to have felt himself called upon to praise both Tasso and Marini; but he contrived rather to imply than acknowledge the claim as regarded the latter. He associated him nominally with Tasso; but applied an epithet to his exuberant

poem, the *Adonis*, capable of being taken in a good or bad sense, according to the reader's inclination.*

Milton, curiously enough, is the next distinguished poet in the order of time who wrote sonnets in the Italian language. For the most part they are very different in point of taste from those of the Marinesque poets; though how far the admirers of the latter might have been justified in finding fault with the phraseology, I am not qualified to pronounce. I can only discover that they contained phrases not common, and wearing a look of antiquity. An accomplished Italian gentleman told me that they were not free from an admixture of the styles of different ages; and Milton informs us in a Canzone that the young gentlemen and ladies who read them rallied him on his venturing to write love-verses in a tongue not his own. Perhaps they saw the mixture of styles, and did not like to mention it. Perhaps also they missed the taste in vogue; which may account for his having in one instance complied with it. It is in the sonnet beginning "*Per certo i bei vostri occhi*," which, with its sunshine of eyes and vapors of sighs, is positively Marinesque. Warton, in a note upon it, says, "He was now in the land of conceits, and was infected by writing in its language." The rest of the sonnets, however, are not in this strain; though, considered as love-verses, it is not to be wondered that the sensuous Italian age considered them fail-

* "*Prolixus*" was the word. In English the meaning of it has generally been derogatory; at present is always so. But in Latin it might imply, and usually did, we believe, an exuberance of a rich and generous kind. The root of the word, *lix*, appears to have been the same as that of *liquor*.

ures. They are too stately, self-exalting, and stoical. The greatest compliment which the young poet stoops to pay to a beautiful singer is by thinking it desirable to "stop his ears"; and to another lady he gives a list of his own virtues, and talks of not being afraid of the thunder of a universe. The sonnet, however, in which he thus announces his powers of defiance, has justly been thought personally characteristic.

In the year in which Milton visited Italy, died Chiabrera; a man whose wilful, fiery genius, and ambition of discovering new worlds in poetry, — which he said that, like his countryman Columbus, he would do or perish, — was in danger of swamping his name with posterity in the same gulfs with Marini, had not the Genoese poet been saved by a robuster and more northerly temperament, a more solid learning, and perhaps by the determination to be "alone in his glory." Chiabrera introduced into Italian poetry the regular Greek ode, with strophe and epode; attempted to naturalize Greek forms of speech and compound epithets such as *chiomindorato, riccaddobbato,** etc., and aspired to be the modern Anacreon as well as Pindar. Nor do his countrymen dispute the claim; though his coloring was more gorgeous than delicate, and his style more diffuse and luscious than simple and sweet. Chiabrera, however, evinces considerable grace at times, great majesty at others, and a magical power always of making much out of little. I hardly

* *Golden-haired, richly-mantled.* One is surprised that the Italian language rejects what is so easily and happily admitted in English; but so it is, and I am not prepared to account for it, especially as words in Italian poetry are so accustomed to glide into one another.

know whether I ought to have said so much of him in this book, as he has left but few sonnets. There is something in these of a combination both of his Pindaric and his Anacreontic propensities. But he seems to have disliked the restraint of the sonnet. It is difficult, in speaking of these Italian poets, or of any poets who have at all interested us, to avoid lingering over the mention of them, and sketching something of their portraits. Nor indeed can they be thoroughly known upon particular points, unless we are aware of their characters in general. Chiabrera has a fine line upon Columbus respecting the circumstances under which the great mariner made his first appearance in the world, and met everywhere with rejection. He reminds "the great vulgar and the small," how they once despised the

"Nudo nocchier, promettitor di regni."

"The naked seaman, promiser of kingdoms."

In the brief account which this fiery poet left us of his own life, the reader is not a little startled to find him alluding to more than one instance of his having avenged himself of injuries, to an extent that is generally kept in the darkest silence, and not supposed possible in a man of his pursuits. Respecting the first occasion, which happened at Rome when he was a student, he simply uses the two words "avenged himself"; alleging that he had been "outraged for no fault of his own," by a Roman gentleman. On the second occasion, he says that, getting into brawls — also "for no fault of his own" — and remaining "slightly wounded," — *ferito leggermente*, — he avenged himself "with his own hand." It is to be feared, from these additional words, that in the former instance there was a "hand" concerned in the vengeance. The first of these avengements cost him ten years' effort to obtain pardon; the latter many months' absence from the Genoese territory. Yet either the circumstances were held so exculpatory, or the crime pardonable on some such extraordinary account or other, that no man appears

The counteraction furnished by Chiabrera's favor with courts and princes against the popular influence of Marini is thought by some to have been the entire cause of its ultimate destruction; but the probability is, that it was only one of the causes, and that the main cause was its own excess. The absurdity naturally wore itself out; bad taste can as little be the normal condition of things as bad health; and literary plagues disappear before the breath of reason and good sense, as others do before air and cleanliness.

Marini's influence, however, notwithstanding the counteraction of Chiabrera, took no little time in declining. It may be said to have prevailed, more or less, from the closing period of the sixteenth century, till the same period in the seventeenth, when a set of poets arose who combined the good sense of the French school of criticism, as represented by their chief, Boileau, with such perceptions of the poetical, as enabled them to set the gravest as well as liveliest counter-examples of their own; and these put an end to the Marinesque delusion forever.

afterwards to have led a more honored, healthy, and even happy life, than this seeming prototype of a dark figure in a romance. Chiabrera lived at Rome or at Genoa as he pleased; was welcomed in every city in Italy; princes and princesses caressed him; he died in his native place aged eighty-six; and the Pope — Urban VIII. — wrote his epitaph. It should be added, that he was a very devout Catholic; wrote furious invectives against Luther and other reformers, calling them "beasts," "monsters," and "carrion"; and among all the eulogies on distinguished and undistinguished men which he otherwise lavished wherever he went, he took care not to say a word of the Pope's quondam friend Galileo, who was found guilty — as Milton says — of differing with the Dominican friars in astronomy.

I speak of Redi, the charming author of the *Bacco in Toscana;* of Menzini, the satirist; of Maggi and Lemene, who were at once devotees and men of humor; and of the "great Filicaia," as others besides Wordsworth called him, — a truly lyrical poet, full of sensibility and enthusiasm, which were nevertheless under the control of a lofty judgment. Redi, physician to the Grand Duke Cosmo II., and Filicaia, one of his senators, were compatriots closely united. Menzini, another Tuscan, was a professor of rhetoric. Maggi, who was Greek professor at Milan, and Lemene, resident minister from Lodi to that city, were as closely united as Redi and Filicaia; but all the five poets were friends and fellow-workers, and all distinguished writers of sonnets. Redi led the way with recurring to the manner, not only of Petrarca, but of Dante, and Filicaia closed it with some of the finest sonnets in the language. Redi, who was a distinguished physiologist as well as poet, was the experimentalist who put an end to the doctrine of equivocal generation. He disproved the old notion, immortalized by Virgil, and prevailing down to his own time, that bees arose out of the carcasses of oxen. It is pleasant to see him helping to undo a like notion that good poems could rise out of the corruptions of men's wits.

With these poets became associated in literary, if not so much in personal respects, Guidi, an ecclesiastic at Rome, who may be styled an irregular successor of Chiabrera, — for his lyrics despise the restraints of strophe and antistrophe, — and Zappi, a jurist in the same city, whose sonnets, full of grace and originality, stand prominently forward as *sui generis*.

Guidi wrote few sonnets, but they are not unsuitable

to his lofty and genuine, though somewhat presumptuous vein. Zappi wrote many; and his and the sonnets of Manfredi, a Bolognese astronomer, who was born a little later, may be said to close the list of such Italian poets as gave celebrity, lasting or otherwise, to this class of composition. I wish I could think those of Manfredi worthy of his reputation; but in such as I have seen — and I believe I have seen most, if not all — I can find nothing of mark.

Strangely and unfortunately enough, the very zeal in Italy for the restoration of good taste, which set Redi and his friends upon opposing their sonnets to those of the followers of Marini, was made the ground for a fantastical movement on the part of some inferior men, which occasioned a new enfeeblement of the national poetry, though of another sort. The circumstance is curious enough to warrant a more particular mention of it than has yet been given, I believe, in an English book; and as our friend the Sonnet became the principal sufferer, I will here notice it accordingly. The story is one of a truly Italian kind, though not of the sort to which the readers of Sismondi and Mrs. Radcliffe have been accustomed. There are quite as many grown children in Italy as in other countries, — indeed, far more than in most, — notwithstanding all that has been thought of its being full of nothing but monks and assassins.

Crescimbeni, the future historian of Italian poetry, an enthusiast, but a mediocrist, both in verse and prose, was sitting, — his biographer tells us, — one summer's evening, on the "grass in a green meadow, enjoying himself with some friend in the recital of certain beauti-

ful pastorals," when the pleasure of coming together in this manner so delighted one of the party, that he cried out, "It seems to me, that we have restored Arcadia to-day." The words struck them all, Crescimbeni in particular; and the consequence was the institution of a society for the restoration of good taste in poetry, under the title of "Arcadians," with the future historian himself for the *Custode*, — *keeper* is the English word; and in England it would have been thought much fitter for the officer of a society so called, than for the gentleman who locks up the doors of the Royal Academy; for these poetical Academicians actually played at shepherd and shepherdess! They took pastoral names; received gifts of imaginary lands in the Grecian Arcadia; and assembled in a woody garden to recite verses, and compliment one another on inspirations from the God Pan. The society was organized in the year 1690, during the reign of our William the Third. In England, the proposal for such a body corporate would have been received with shouts of laughter. In France, the society would have anticipated the scenes of Watteau, — the gallantries and effeminacy of the days of the Regent Duke of Orleans or Louis the Fifteenth. But a project that would have appeared ridiculous to the subjects of King William, and that would have been perilous to decency among those of Louis the Fourteenth, was so mixed up with better things in these imaginative, and, strange as it may seem, most unaffected people, the Italians — for such they are — that, so far from disgusting a nation accustomed to romantic impulses, and to the singing of poetry in their streets and gondolas, their gravest and most distinguished men, and in many instances wo-

men too, ran childlike into the delusion. The best of their poets accepted farms in Arcadia forthwith; lawyers and clergymen followed in abundance; monks, Jesuits, nobles, princes, cardinals, even men of science, all gave in their adhesion; one of the cardinals, on becoming Pope, did not withdraw his name; it figures conspicuously in the list; and so little transitory did the fashion turn out to be, that not only was Crescimbeni its active officer for eight and thirty years, but the society, to whatever state of insignificance it may have been reduced, exists at the present moment. A suite of apartments in the Vatican was given it by Pius the Sixth, and plentiful use made of its rhymes by the Jesuits, whom he restored. *Counteract them with better, O poets of England and America!* Englishmen themselves, not long since living, were counted among its members, — Mathias, the author of the "Pursuits of Literature," for one. Joseph Cooper Walker, who wrote the "Memoirs of Tassoni," and "Historical Memoir on Italian Tragedy," was another; and, I think, Hayley was a third; to say nothing of the Della Cruscans, and Mrs. Thrale.

The Arcadians, in the account given of them by their *Custode*, persuaded themselves, that their object in thus coming together to play at shepherd and shepherdess, and recite their effusions, was the restoration of the good taste that had been spoilt by Marini; and they boasted that they had attained their object. But Chiabrera, and the other poets that came after him, had begun the reformation already, and though the founders of the society fell in with it, the society itself unfortunately did but ultimately produce a new decline of Italian poetry in regard to dignity and strength. If it had not been

for Alfieri and Foscolo, for Pindemonte, and for the genius undeniably though unworthily possessed by the timeserver Monti, there appears even to have been a chance of another Marinesque epidemic in the effusions of some friends of the persons to whom allusion has just been made, as known in England by the title of Della Cruscans, — English idlers in Florence who wrote such stuff as required no greater satirist to undo than Mr. Gifford.

Growing disgusts in Italy at church and state fortunately invigorated better tastes of all kinds; Leopardi, Manzoni, and others appeared full of the power inspired by indignation; and though the disappointments of the Italian patriots have driven most of the writers that came after these poets into the bitter enjoyments of satire and burlesque, yet there is a tonic in the bitter, good for all good causes; and our friend the Sonnet, delivered from his enfeeblers, has failed neither to administer his proper balm when required, nor to wield against despotism and bigotry such terrible cats of nine tails as their enormities compelled him to take in hand.

But this new aspect of our friend has brought us to a point in his character which I have yet to describe.

V.

OF OTHER LEGITIMATE BUT OBSOLETE FORMS OF THE SONNET, PARTICULARLY THE COMIC SONNET.

THE form of sonnet to which this Essay has hitherto referred admits of varieties little suspected by those who have not happened to wander out of the customary tracks of Italian reading. When I first met with them, they struck me with some such agreeable surprise as we experience when we find grave acquaintances unexpectedly amusing; and as the intimacy advanced, and I saw into what extravagances they could run, I seemed to be admitted among the same acquaintances when they were indulging in pastimes at once organized and extravagant, such as the "High Jinks" recorded of Counsellor Pleydell and his friends, in the delightful pages of Walter Scott.

The prevailing form itself, when it took its precedence in old times, did not hinder poets, for a long while, from writing sonnets in lines of eight syllables or less, from adding a line or two to the fourteen by way of supplement, or even from interspersing supplementary lines to the quatrains and terzettes, under the denomination of *Codas*, or *Tails*; so that to a modern English reader, the

octave which is made of these quatrains looks sometimes — under the impression of that idea — like a barrister's wig with the two tails jerked sideways, and the whole sonnet like a wig tasselled with tails throughout. Among others of inferior note, there were *Duodenary Sonnets*, or sonnets in the twelve-syllabled lines called by the sensitive Italian ear *versi sdruccioli*, slippery or sliding verses, on account of their terminating in dactyls — tènĕrĕ, Vènĕrĕ — ; *Mute Sonnets*, a term characteristic of almost all Sonnets written in English, the muteness consisting of rhymes in one syllable ; *Continuous* or *Iterating Sonnets*, which had but one rhyme throughout, or sometimes no rhyme at all, every line terminating or commencing with the same reiterated words, or word ; *Answering Sonnets*, or sonnets in answer to other sonnets, the rhymes of which were repeated in exact correspondence but with dissimilar meanings ; *Retrograde Sonnets*, which read the same way forwards and backwards, somewhat after a like fashion of some verses of the ancients ; *Chained* or *Linked Sonnets*, in which every successive verse began with the rhyme or last word of its antecedent ; *Interwoven Sonnets*, in which the lines not only rhymed as usual, but in the middle or other parts of the verse also ; *Crowning Sonnets*, or a series of them joined together for purposes of panegyric, so as to form a supposed crown for the head of the person lauded ; lastly, *Caudated* or *Tailed Sonnets*, which, besides including the forms under that name above mentioned, gradually took augmentations which were increased *ad libitum*, and on the strength of that privilege established themselves as the regular *Comic Sonnet*, and became very popular.

The reader will have observed that several of these forms are mere puerilities, and require no further notice. When written on serious subjects, one is surprised how poets of any worth could put sober thoughts into frames so fantastic; and yet this was done by all the four great poets of Italy with the exception of Ariosto, — a man, be it observed, who combined the comic faculty with the serious, and therefore understood the boundaries that divided "the sublime from the ridiculous"; though from the very enjoyment of the knowledge he sometimes took a pleasure in steering closely between them. In Dante's miscellaneous poems, besides worse though shorter vagaries of a similar kind, there is a dull pleasantry or piece of gravity, one hardly knows which, in which the changes are rung upon five terminating words through a series of seventy-six lines.

Petrarca condescended to the like trifling, in the more ordinary shape of *sestine;* that is to say, stanzas of six blank verses, with terminations common to them all; and Tasso has a Sonnet on the death of a prince, in which the only terminating words of the lines are *peace* and *war,* — *pace* and *guerra.*

What was absurd, however, when gravely intended, became amusing as a jest. The following is a specimen. It is a sonnet with no greater variety in its terminations than those of the sonnet of Tasso; but the jest makes all the difference. The author of it was a wit of the noble family of the Pazzi. Varchi, the Florentine critic and historian, who was the subject of it, and who was himself a distinguished writer of sonnets, must have felt inclined to apply to it the epithet which Falstaff gives to the iteration of his bantering Prince Hal. Varchi had

used a freedom in criticising Petrarca's famous Canzoni on the eyes of Laura which gave offence to the poet's admirers; at least so I gather from the story, for I have not seen the criticism. Pazzi took up their cause, and sung the critic's name in his ears after the following provoking fashion: —

"Le Canzoni degli Occhi ha letto il Varchi,
Ed ha cavato al buon Petrarca gli occhi;
E questo lo vedrebbe un uom senz' occhi;
Cosa, per certo, non degna del Varchi.
Teneva ogni uomo per fermo, che il Varchi
Fosse de la Toscana lingua gli occhi,
E ch' ei sapesse ogni cosa a chiusi occhi,
Tal che ingannato ognun resta del Varchi.
E come già ognun bramava il Varchi,
E non parea se ne saziasser gli occhi,
E ogni lingua dicea, Varchi, Varchi;
Cosi ora non è chi volga gli occhi
In quella parte dove passa il Varchi;
Tal che il Varchi vorria non aver occhi."

The "Eyes" of Petrarch have been read by Varchi,
And Varchi has put out the poor man's eyes,
As any one may see that has no eyes;
A thing, I must say, not becoming Varchi.
People used formerly to think that Varchi
Was of the Tuscan tongue the very eyes;
One that saw all things, though he shut his eyes;
A point on which they were deceived in Varchi:
So now, whereas all used to long for Varchi,
And not a soul could satiate his eyes,
Or cease vociferating Varchi, Varchi,
Nobody thinks it worth troubling his eyes
To give, as he goes by, one glance at Varchi;
So that poor Varchi fain would have no eyes.

Varchi, who was a conscientious critic and a great admirer of Petrarca, was very angry; and Pazzi, who not-

withstanding his jest, appears to have been a good-natured man, gave him the "soft answer" which "turneth away wrath."

The *Mute Sonnets*, or comic sonnets rhyming in monosyllables, are mostly without the *coda;* tails, though frequent adjuncts, not being necessities to sonnets of a comic nature. It is impossible for English readers to be as much entertained by these mute sonnets as Italians are. The abundance and flowing beauty of dissyllables in the Italian language caused their rhymes in general to be dissyllabical: English rhymes, on the contrary, are for the most part monosyllabic; and hence, by a curious contrariety in their association of ideas, the Englishman thinks he doubles the jest of his verse by doubling the rhyme, while the Italian, to enforce the point of his, reduces his two syllables to one. The terminating dissyllable, to the Englishman, — at least whenever he chooses to think so, — easily acquires a tone of levity and the ludicrous. He respects the short and decided step, the firmness and *no-nonsense* of his monosyllable. To the Italian, on the other hand, the repetitions of it on these occasions jar against all his feelings of gravity. They affect him much as if he saw a man taking a series of unexpected jolting steps down a staircase, or receiving — or giving — so many equally unlooked for punches in the stomach. It would take a long residence in England or America to enable an Italian to see the jest of the double rhymes in "Hudibras"; and it would take no less time in Italy to qualify the Englishman for a perception of the fun residing in the monosyllables of Berni or Casti. As imagination however may help the reader in either case, especially if he has a turn

for the ludicrous, and as I wish to make this Essay as complete in itself as I can, I here give a specimen of the mute sonnet from this scapegrace Casti. A long poem, all in masterly double rhymes, would be thought a great feat in English verse. Casti has written two hundred sonnets on one subject, all in masterly single rhymes, and in a style which his countrymen admire for its idiomatic purity and its classical correctness. It is a pity he had not written all his works in the like unobjectionable vein. The jovial poet pretends — or perhaps the subject was founded on some actual poetical fact not incredible in the annals of a man of his way of life — that he was dunned by an implacable creditor for the sum of three Giuli; that is to say, for some fifteen pence or thereabouts. A Giulio is a small silver coin of one of the Popes of that name, — Julius. Casti says that he is waylaid by this creditor at every turn; that the debt mingles with all his thoughts; and has made his life miserable; that he sees no way of escaping from it; that the man's death will not deliver him, because he is a married man with children, therefore will leave heirs to the demand, who from their tenderest infancy will be "little creditors," — *creditorelli*, — all tormenting him for the fifteen pence with hereditary importunity; and so he goes on "piling up the agony" through his two hundred sonnets; which he ends not by paying the debt, but with bidding his creditor good-night "forever." It is true, he bids farewell to the *Giuli* also, but only as a theme parted with, not as an account settled. To settle the account would have been to destroy its immortality.

Gray, in the course of his "Long Story," ingeniously says, "Here five hundred stanzas are lost." A reader

of Casti's *Giuli Tre* may wonder that he did not close his book with a sonnet of the species before-mentioned, called the sonnet with a tail. It is one commencing with the usual fourteen lines, but possessing an unbounded privilege of adding to their number; so that the poet might have dismissed his book into space, like a paper-kite, furnished with a tail beyond that of a comet.

Of this tailed species of sonnet, more anon. Here follows the sample of Casti:—

Ben cento volte ho replicato a te
Questa istessa infallibil verità,
Che a conto mio da certo tempo in quà
La razza de' quattrini si perdè.
Tu, non ostante, vieni intorno a me
Con insoffribile importunità,
E per quei maledetti Giuli Tre
Mi perseguiti senza carità.
Forse in disperazion ridur mi vuo',
Ond' io m'appicchi, e vuoi vedermi in giù
Pender col laccio al collo? Oh questo no.
Risolverommi a non pagarti più,
E in guisa tal te disperar farò,
E vo' piuttosto che ti appicchi tu.

I 've said forever, and again I say,
And it 's a truth as plain as truth can be,
That from a certain period to this day
Pence are a family quite extinct with me.
And yet you still pursue me, and waylay,
With your insufferable importunity,
And for those d—d infernal Giuli Tre
Haunt me without remorse or decency.
Perhaps you think that you 'll torment me so,
You 'll make me hang myself? You wish to say,
You saw me *sus. per coll.* — No, Giuli, no.
The fact is, I 'll determine not to pay,
And drive *you*, Giuli, to a state so low,
That you shall hang yourself, and I be gay.

Of the Tailed Sonnet, or sonnet with a *coda*, England has been in possession of a specimen for these two hundred years, without knowing it. The author is no less a person than Milton, and the sonnet has received an abundance of notes from his editors, though, strange to say, not one of those gentlemen, albeit they included readers of Italian, knew what it was. They all put it under the head, not of his Sonnets, but of his Miscellaneous Poems. Warton, it is true, speaks of it as forming an "irregular sonnet"; but this only shows that he was not aware of its being a regular one; for such, of its kind, it is. It is a comic sonnet after the regular Italian fashion, in all its forms; that is to say, a composition consisting of fourteen lines of the usual structure, followed by a *coda* or tail, of one or more joints of eight syllables rhyming with its precursor, and two others of the customary length rhyming by themselves. Generally the tail is shorter than the body; sometimes, as before observed, much longer. I have a comic sonnet of Berni's now before me, with a tail extending beyond a couple of pages.

The inventor of this class of sonnets was moved by a genuine comic impulse. Humor is by its nature overflowing. The writer felt a disposition to run out of bounds; the bounds themselves produced a temptation to break them; the very restriction thus became a warrant for the license; and the form of the grave sonnet was preserved, in order to enhance the gayety of its violation.

It is curious, that the solemn and stately Milton should have been the first English writer to introduce a comic stranger to his countrymen. The stranger how-

ever, it must be owned, has become unusually solemn in his company. He jests; but his jest is too fierce and bitter to have a comic impression. The sonnet is the famous attack on the Presbyterians of the Long Parliament, beginning

"Because you have thrown off your Prelate Lord."

The present book would have contained it; but as ladies, it is hoped, as well as gentlemen, will read the book, and the sonnet of the indignant poet contains a word, which however proper for him to utter in his day, and with the warrant of his indignation, is no longer admitted into good company, the effusion has been left out. A similar objection, oddly enough, applies to the only other sonnet of the kind in our language. It contains a phrase equally warrantable on the writer's part, yet equally difficult to read aloud.* Another stately poet, Tasso, has a comic sonnet of this description on

* An oath, to wit, of an honest seaman, who thinks that the eyes of Italians have no right to be saved, if they look with scorn on the fogs of his native country. The sonnet, which is full of humor, is addressed to a Fog. It appeared in the first volume of Bentley's Miscellany, page 371; and was written by my lamented young friend Egerton Webbe, whose wit, scholarship, and rare powers of reflection, would have rendered him one of the ornaments of the nation. Mr. Webbe was as thorough a gentleman in his own language as in every other respect; but when describing characters, he thought it incumbent on him, like Smollett and others, to omit nothing characteristic that pens were considered privileged to repeat.

[On reflection, I have put this sonnet in these volumes, leaving a space to be filled up, or otherwise, by the reader with words of his own, according to his notions of propriety. Ladies themselves, or their brothers for them, can easily find some three monosyllables as innocent in their eyes as the originals are in those of the seaman.]

Cats. At least, he intends it to be comic; and it would have been particularly appropriate for insertion in this part of the Essay, because it closes with an analogy between the tails of cats and the tails of sonnets. But it is too poor; especially in comparison with his other and famous sonnet to *Cats.* The only other specimens of the Tailed Comic Sonnet, to which I can refer at present, with one exception, are those in the collection of poems called the *Parnaso Italiano,* and are chiefly the production of Berni, the greatest Italian master of burlesque; but they are too full of local and personal allusion to interest the general reader, — indeed, are not thoroughly intelligible to anybody without the help of notes; and the editor of that work, like too many editors of his nation, had an absurd habit of seldom giving any headings to what he selected. You read sonnet after sonnet, and ode after ode, without knowing the persons to whom they are addressed, or, often, what they are about. I therefore take the specimen furnished me by the same critical work, in which I found the sonnet on Varchi. It is the production of Grazzini the novelist; and is one of those caricatures of a personal discomfort, which, having a foundation in truth, please us the more, the more they are exaggerated by the animal spirits, which thus enable us to bear the annoyance.

Io vo farvi saper, caro Bettino,
Com' io sto, e qual è la vita mia:
La febbre credo averla tutta via,
E non posso patir nè pan, nè vino:
Non vo' del corpo punto, ne miccino.
La notte poi, quando dormir vorria,
Sento far le zanzare armeggeria,
E le mie gote sono il Saracino.

Altre ne l' aria si stan borbottando
Un certo orribil suon, pien di terrore,
Che farebbe paura al Conte Orlando.
Altre dipoi ne vengono a furore
Inverso il viso mio, forte ronzando ;
Mi dan trafitte che ne vanno al cuore ;
Io per l' aspro dolore,
E per farne vendetta, con gran furia
Mi batto il ceffo, e fommi doppia ingiuria ;
Elle tornano a furia,
Trafiggendomi più di mano in mano,
Ed io mi dò ceffate da marrano.
E questo giuoco strano
Mi convien far per fino a lo mattino ;
Che venir possa il canchero a Bronzino.

" Dear Benedetto, — not to let you pine
For want of news of me, this comes to say,
My fever grows upon me day by day,
And bread I can as little bear as wine ;
Judge how I must detest your turkey and chine.
At night, when I would sleep, to my dismay
I hear the gnats arming them for the fray,
And all they burn for, are these cheeks of mine.
Dread note of preparation ! hideous hum !
First comes in air an awful mustering sound,
Fit to have scared Orlando from his blast ; *
Then, raging, upon eyes, nose, mouth, they come,
Each trumping louder betwixt wound and wound,
Setting my wits and very soul aghast.
Fairly made mad at last,
I start up in the bed, and to the rout
Put them too well, by cuffing my own snout ;
They, madder, turn about,
And rage as if they said, — ' *You* rout us ! — Never.'
I sit on, cuffing myself worse than ever :

* When he blew his horn in Roncesvalles.

Desp'rate and vain endeavor!
They quit me not till morn. By heav'ns! I think
'T would make a very statue snort and blink."

We do not understand the meaning of the last line about a "plague on Bronzino." It seems either a proverbial execration, or an allusion to his contemporary and friend, a brother humorist of that name, author of some witty verses in the *Parnaso Italiano* on an imaginary present of a horse. Perhaps it was in a bedroom belonging to Bronzino, that the suffering from the gnats was experienced, owing to the want of a gnat-net, or *zanzaliere.*

We return a moment to the sonnet on Varchi, with its limitations of the verses to a couple of terminating words, in order to say that Crescimbeni, in the third book of "Commentaries" on his "History of Italian Poetry," has given his readers a specimen of the sonnet which iterates but a single word. Every line of it terminates with the word "Argo." It is the solution of a riddle on the ship of the Argonauts; but is not worth repeating. That no form of sonnet, however, which has appeared, and which is of the least interest, even as a curiosity, may be wanting to these pages, I shall make bold, on the strength of the Anglo-American nature of the book, to finish the present portion of my theme with a sonnet of my own, written on the same plan, but on a subject which can be devoid of interest nowhere.* I can speak thus of it with the less immodesty, inasmuch as the reader will see that it is a thing easy for anybody to write, the plan and the subject being once found.

* The single word, to be sure, is double, that is to say, a compound word; but the spirit of the thing is the same.

ITERATING SONNET,

Written during the Talk of a War between England and the United States.

War between England and the United States!
Impossible! Pshaw! Stuff!—"United States!"
Why, they themselves are the United States:
London and Boston are United States:
New York and Liverpool United States:
Cotton and spinning very United States:
Progress and liberty, United States:
Their names, fames, books, bloods, all United States.
But "bloods are up" in the United States?
Well;—would'st have "low" bloods in the United States?
No: high bloods—high—in both United States:
So high, that, seeing their United States,
They scorn to stoop from such United States
Solely to please poor *dis*-United States.

VI.

OF ENGLISH SONNETS, AND OF THE SONNET ILLEGITIMATE, OR QUATORZEN.

CONSIDERING that the love of Italian poetry has always been greatest in England when English genius has been in its most poetical condition, it is not a little remarkable, that the oldest known sonnet in our language dates no farther back than the reign of Henry the Eighth. It is a translation of a sonnet of Petrarca, and is the production of the noble-minded Sir Thomas Wyatt, who in several of his poems had the courage to aim the most cutting side-blows at the cruelty and effeminacy of that brutal tyrant.

How are we to account for the non-appearance of a sonnet in the poems of Chaucer? — of Chaucer, who was so fond of Italian poetry, such a servant of love, such a haunter of the green corners of revery, particularly if they were "small," — of Chaucer, moreover, who was so especially acquainted with the writings of Petrarca's predecessor Dante, with those of his friend Boccaccio, and who, beside eulogizing the genius of Petrarca himself, is supposed to have made his personal acquaintance at Padua? Out of the four great English poets, Chaucer is the only one who has left us a sonnet of no kind whatso-

ever, though he was qualified for every kind, and though of none of the four poets it would seem more naturally to have fallen in the way.

The secret, I conceive, lay in one of three reasons; perhaps in all three combined: first, that the Anglo-Norman court which he served had so close a connection with France as to lead him, when he was not writing his narrative poetry, rather into French miscellaneous poetry than Italian; second, that the sonnets neither of Dante nor Petrarca had yet followed into England the great poem of the one, or the fame of the Latin poetry of the other; and third, that Chaucer's propensity to narration and character was so truly his master-passion in poetry, as to swallow up all the rest of his tendencies in that direction. It is observable, that, with the single exception of the beautiful and stately exaltation of his mistress's merits, beginning

"Hide, Absalom, thy gilte tresses clear,"—

(which indeed is like a strain of music coming before a queen,) Chaucer's lyrical productions are few and trifling. The second of these reasons, however, I take to have been the chief. Had Chaucer been familiar with the sonnets of men whom he so admired, the very lovingness of his nature would hardly have failed to make him echo their tones.

Wyatt, who came long after these poets, was born in the same year with Casa, whom we have seen purposely roughening the Sonnet, because it had grown too sweet with time. England's first sonnet, in Wyatt's hands, is as rough as if poetry itself had just been born in the woods, among the ruggedest of the sylvan gods. It is

not repeated in this book. I extract one other, which does a little more justice to the writer. But I mention the former in order to observe, that, in common with almost every one of Sir Thomas's sonnets, it abides by the forms of the Legitimate Sonnet; and I may be allowed to add, in reverence for this excellent person, that although he continued for the most part to be a rugged poet, and was at all times rather a good and great man than a master of verse, he showed that he could translate smoothly as well as nobly from another Italian poet, Alamanni, one of whose satires he condensed into an invective of so much force and vehemence against the court of Henry the Eighth, as must have struck even the hard heart of that ruffian with awe and astonishment.

The first English sonnets that possessed anything like Italian music were the production of Wyatt's young friend, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, who is justly ranked among the most elegant and promising of our early poets. He perished at thirty years of age, on a ridiculous pretence, by order of the tyrant whom they both hated; nor is it improbable, that one of the sonnets extracted into this book, — the one commencing "The Assyrian King, in peace, with foul desire" — was the real cause of the murder.

As Wyatt was the first introducer of the Sonnet into his native language, so he was the first, though but in one instance, to set the example of a departure from its laws, and thus introduce the Illegitimate Sonnet. All the rest of his thirty-two sonnets are of the authorized construction. Those of Surrey, which are scarcely half as many in number, are either wholly illegitimate, and setters of the pattern generally followed in England till

lately, or they run upon one rhyme, till they close with a couplet in another, — a form not without precedent in Italian poetry, though very rare. None are destitute of merit; and there are three in the present volumes successively characterized by truth, tenderness, and strength.

It is a curious circumstance, in the history of sonnets, — and might be thought to tell in their disfavor, if the cases were not exceptional, manners of times to be considered, and the vast majority of sonnets of a different description, — that so many of them turn upon illegal attachments. Dante who makes a saint of Beatrice, and ultimately of himself too, and who marries her, as it were, in Heaven, never breathes a syllable of her husband. Nobody would suppose that there had been such a casualty in the lady's life. Beatrice, for all that appears to the contrary, is always the unmarried Beatrice that Dante first became acquainted with, — the same Beatrice Portinari. The married woman, Beatrice de' Bardi, is a gentlewoman never heard of. It is the same with Petrarca. Nobody would dream, from his three hundred sonnets, that there was a gentleman of the name of De Sade, who had a right to ask him "what he meant." The poet ignores the husband during the whole of the lady's life on earth; and when the lady dies, she equally ignores the husband, and invites the poet to come and live with her in Paradise. This looks, in both instances, as if there must have been some remarkable reasons for the conduct, with which readers are unacquainted. Casa, the next famous sonnet-writer to Petrarca, is understood to have addressed his love-verses to a married lady of the name of Quirino. He was an ecclesiastic; who is a person in Roman Catholic coun-

tries that is not permitted to marry; and hence an ecclesiastic, on the principle of extremes meeting, is understood to be the most married of all men. Almost all the love sonnets of Alfieri are addressed to the wife of the second English Pretender, on whose death — from drinking — the poet is understood to have been married to her. The course of my subject has brought me to Sir Philip Sidney, the Stella of whose sonnets was Lady Rich, the wife of a husband who is said to have been as bad as the Pretender: and soon after Sir Philip, we shall meet with Shakespeare, the mysterious heroine of whose sonnets was evidently a person by no means belonging to the household of the great poet. The history of marriage would make a strange history: beautiful and devoted in many instances; ugly and unfitting in others; mixed up in all — though not by the parties — with causes feudal, fiscal, and ecclesiastical, some of which, originating in Roman Catholic times, lie at the root of all which injures the ordinance, and being taken away, would render it fitter to go to an altar than ever it has been yet.

I need not add, that in the present collection of sonnets there is not a single verse which is objectionable. In those from Shakespeare the love is of so true a nature, that as it is not known to whom all his love-sonnets were addressed, and more than one lady might have been concerned in them at different periods of his life, we may hope that the object of the best of them was no less estimable than adored.

Sir Philip Sidney, with an additional and almost Shakespearian flow of ideas, was a very Italianate person in his writings. He acquired from Italian books a portion of

their conceits as well as beauties; took from them the title, and something of the style, of his "Arcadia"; made it, like theirs, a mixture of prose and verse; and in the verse introduced so great a number of their forms of composition that it would have been strange had he never written sonnets after their fashion. The reader will find one or two of them in this collection, highly characteristic. One in particular sounds like the last note of courtly chivalry. It may not be thought unworthy of remark, that the first three introducers of the Sonnet in England, Sir Thomas Wyatt, the Earl of Surrey, and Sir Philip Sidney, were all knightly and accomplished men.

It is not a little curious, that in spite of this example on the part of his friend Sidney and others, and a great love for Italian poetry on his own, the first man that wholly and studiously set aside the Italian pattern of the Sonnet, should be Spenser. I say *studiously* set aside, because the form which he invented for it in its stead, appears to have been the result of repeated experiments.

The poetical student, I think, will not be uninterested by a sight of these experiments. The first, strangely enough, is in blank verse, — a speculation unique of its kind. The second is in three elegiac quatrains, like those of Gray's "Country Churchyard," ending with a couplet; which is the form that was adopted by Shakespeare. The third, which Spenser finally adopted, linked the three quatrains together by means of a rhyme out of each.

It is no little addition to the strangeness of the first of these experiments, that six out of fifteen sonnets which

the poet has thus given in blank verse compose a translation of one of the odes of Petrarca, the twelve-lined stanzas of which he has enlarged for the purpose. And he appears to have been so bent on making them strictly regular sonnets in other respects, that all of them but one exhibit, by means of stops, the most marked Italianesque division into quatrains and terzettes. The specimen, however, here laid before the reader is translated, not out of Petrarca, but from the fine old French poet, Bellay, or rather — to pile curiosity on curiosity — from a Dutch version of the Frenchman.*

"I saw a fresh spring rise out of a rocke,
Clere as christall against the sunny beames,
The bottome yellow like the shining sand,
That golden Pactol drives upon the plaine:
It seemed that arte and nature strived to joyne
There in one place all pleasures of the eye.
There was to heare a noise alluring slepe
Of many accordes, more swete than Mermaid's songs.
The seates and benches shone as ivorie;
An hundred Nymphes sate side by side about,
When from nie hilles a naked rout of Faunes
With hideous cry assembled on the place;
Which with their feete uncleane the water fouled,
Threw down the seates, and drove the Nimphs to flight.

If the guess of Spenser's biographers be correct in dating his birth "probably about the year 1553," the poet must have been sixteen when he wrote these blank-verse sonnets, for they were published in the year 1569, which was that of his entrance into the University.

* See Todd's edition of Spenser, vol. i. p. v., in Life, and vol. vii. p. 525. I have no hesitation in attributing these blank-verse sonnets to Spenser, not only for the reasons there given, but from the poet's whole character, both as a man and a gentleman.

Youths went much earlier to the University in those days than they do now. How Spenser came to be acquainted with the Dutch language does not appear; though there was much intercourse with the Low Countries in those days; and English words possess keys to Dutch. It was easy also to get somebody to help him to a prose version. Upon the whole, the sonnets are worthy of the boyhood of such a man. You may see his noble and sweet notes commencing in every one of them. Yet observe how rich the strain has become in his version of the same sonnet, published some twenty years afterwards. I seize the opportunity of adding it, because it furnishes a sample of the illegitimate species of sonnet above alluded to, which is called Elegiac, and which formed the second of the author's experiments in sonnet-making:—

"I saw a spring out of a rocke forth rayle,
As cleare as christall gainst the sunnie beames,
The bottome yeallow, like the golden grayle *
That bright Pactolus washeth with his streames:
It seem'd that Art and Nature had assembled
All pleasure there for which man's hart could long;
And there a noyse, alluring sleepe, soft trembled,
Of manie accords, more sweete than Mermaid's song:
The seates and benches shone as yvorie,
And hundred Nymphs sate side by side about;
When from nigh hills, with hideous outcrie,
A troupe of Satyres in the place did rout,
Which with their villeine feete the streame did ray, †
Threw down the seats, and drove the Nymphs away. ‡

* Gravel.

† Beray, — befoul.

‡ Whether this version of Bellay's Sonnet was from the Dutch or the French, it is very close to the French original.

In the form of his third and last experiment in sonnet-making, which, like the blank-verse specimen, was an entirely new one, Spenser wrote all the sonnets which he finally published when he was forty years of age, under the title of *Amoretti*, — Little Loves. The title is good; but compared with what was to be expected of them, these Little Loves — not to speak it irreverently — are rather a set of dull, middle-aged gentlemen, images of the author's time of life, and of the commonplace sufferings which he appears to have undergone from a young and imperious mistress. Spenser gave the world to understand, though in words the reverse of disparaging to the lady, that he married, as the phrase is, "beneath him." If the heroine of the sonnets was this lady, as she is believed to have been, it is not improbable that she was at once rendered proud by the homage, and secretly mortified and irritated at not knowing how to receive it; that is to say, how to respond to its refinements. When her admirer's love is at its happiest, it is only by comparison with something the reverse. The following sonnet is one of the best. It partakes of his sweet modulation; and one of the lines, "Through the broad world," has the strength of his full hand upon it. The reader will bear in mind, with regard to this form of sonnet, what has been said of its substitution of a third quatrain and a couplet for the two terzettes, and its linking all the quatrains together with a rhyme out of each.

Mark when she smiles with amiable cheare,
And tell me whereto can ye lyken it,
When on each eyelid sweetly doe appeare
An hundred graces as in shade to sit.
Lykest it seemeth, in my simple wit,
Unto the fayre sunshine in somer's day,

That when a dreadfull storme away is flit,
Through the broad world doth spread his goodly ray;
At sight whereof, each bird that sits on spray,
And every beast that to his den was fled,
Comes forth afresh out of their late dismay,
And to the light lift up their drouping hed.
So my storme-beaten hart likewise is cheared
With that sunshine, when cloudy looks are cleared.

This form of sonnet never became popular. It is surely not so happy as that of the Italian sonnet. The rhyme seems at once less responsive and always interfering; and the music has no longer its major and minor divisions. It is not indeed easy to conceive what induced the inventor of the beautiful stanza of the "Faerie Queene," with its fine organ-like close, to employ so inferior a construction in all these eighty-eight sonnets called *Amoretti*. Finding perhaps how much his first rhyming invention was admired, he too hastily thought to succeed in another, and failed as authors' second enterprises, when so suggested, are apt to fail. For it is genuine love of the thing that inspires a first invention; whereas self-love too often aims at the second; and self-love is no such singer as love. Yet Spenser, in his mature days, never wrote but one sonnet in any other form. To my ear there is something in it of the teasing nature of Dante's *terza rima*, which is a chain that seems as if it would never end, and is dragged after him by the presumptuous poet through his next world, like a retribution. It is observable that the *terza rima* was never again used by the Italians in a long poem; at least, not in any that has survived. They confined it to satires, to didactic poetry, and to familiar epistles.

But I fear I am writing too much upon Spenser.

Spenser's friend Raleigh left us so excellent a sonnet on the "Faerie Queene," that it makes us wish he had written a thousand; or rather, that he had devoted his whole life to poetry, instead of the pursuits that ruined him. Raleigh's fate was singularly unlucky. He had a fine vein of poetry, which he scarcely touched: he believed there was a region of gold in the New World; and there was, — but he missed it. He had the glory of discovering Virginia, but was unable to colonize it; and he obtained the favor of Queen Elizabeth, and was the terror of the foes of England, only to be imprisoned and put to death by her unworthy successor. He had much better have stuck to his Gentleman-Pensionership, and confined his conquests to the pen. His pen was very like a sword. You see, in this one little sonnet,* what possession he takes of the whole poetical world, in favor of the sovereignty of his friend Spenser. He was not exactly in the right; but when did conquerors consider the right? The sonnet is of the least artistical order, as to construction, consisting only of the three elegiac quatrains and a couplet; and it has the fault of monotonous assonance in the rhymes; yet it flows with such nerve and will, and is so dashing and sounding in the rest of its modulation, that no impression remains upon the mind but that of triumphant force.

Shakespeare's hundred and fifty-four sonnets are of the same unartistical construction as this of Raleigh; and you think of it as little, for similar reasons. His total neglect however of the Italian form, in connection with as entire a silence in regard to the poets of Italy,

* The sonnet beginning,

"Methought I saw where Laura lay."

to their works and their names, — for one would think it hardly possible that such a poet should put not a word respecting such brother poets in the mouths of any of his Italian gentlemen and ladies, — tends to go counter to the opinion which has been entertained of his acquaintance with Italian literature, and even with the Italian soil. A visit to Italy by Shakespeare is a thing delightful to fancy, and it is a pity Mr. Knight did not make a chapter of one in his conjectural biography, — a species of writing, by the way, strangely objected to; for what better entertainment can admirers of great men desire, than to live thus in their company through every probable phase of their existence? But on the above accounts alone I cannot believe in these Italian experiences of Shakespeare; to say nothing of other such reasons as his mixture of Latin with Italian names in his *Dramatis Personæ*, and his mispronunciation of Italian names at all liable to the mistake; such as *Rò̀meo* for *Romèo*, *Vìola* for *Viò̀la*, and *Desdemò̀na* for *Desdèmona*. The great dramatist, it is true, was not in the habit of speaking of other writers, however he may have admired them; but if he had visited Italy, or been conversant with Italian books, he would have known that nothing was more common for educated Italians than to quote and express admiration for their native poets; and his gentlemen and ladies of Verona and other places, might have been expected, in their various wit-encounters and love-makings, to act accordingly. In the year when Shakespeare is supposed to have been in Italy, 1593, Tasso was at the height of his fame. Chiabrera also, and Marini, were flourishing; Petrarca had never ceased to flourish; and Dante's verses were in all serious mouths,

and Ariosto's in all lively. How came it, that neither Shakespeare nor his characters ever took the least notice of them?

But I am digressing from my purpose. Be all this as it may, Shakespeare's sonnets, like the rest of his productions, conquer all objection. Obscure and perplexing as some of them are, others contain passages of as exquisite poetry as any he wrote, and the best of them are veritable jewels. It is not easy to call to mind anything more loftily beautiful than the sonnet beginning,

> "Full many a glorious morning have I seen
> Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,"—

anything more humbly and then exultingly beautiful than the one beginning,

> "When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,"—

or more deeply and affectingly beautiful than

> "No longer mourn for me when I am dead,
> Than you shall hear the surly, sullen bell," etc.
> . . . . "For I love you so,
> That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,
> If thinking on me then should make you woe."

All the tears, tenderness, and generosity of the truest love are in that passage. The reader, I hope, will find the very best of these sonnets in the present book. I do not say the "best": those would be too numerous; but only the "very best," — those which surpass the surpassing.

Among the miscellaneous poems of Ben Jonson are a few sonnets, two of which are of the legitimate order, but hardly worthy of him. One of the others, very characteristic, is inserted in this collection.

Learned Ben Jonson's learned friend, Donne, not only wrote some five or six and twenty sonnets, almost all of which are of the legitimate order, but he is the only English poet, as far as I am aware, who has given us a Crown of Sonnets, after the fashion alluded to in the preceding section. It comprises the first seven of his "Holy Sonnets"; and in reference to the native country of the fashion, he has entitled it *La Corona*. It has fine passages, and I wish I could extract it into this book, as a specimen of the class it belongs to; but Donne's piety, though sincere, was not healthy. It does not do justice to the Divine Goodness. Fortunately the best sonnet he wrote, though it is upon a subject on which, generally speaking, he was in more than one sense of the word least happy, — Death, — is equally unexceptionable and noble.

The sonnets of Shakespeare's other contemporaries, Daniel and Drayton, are of a like construction with his own, but very different in substance. Daniel, it might have been supposed, would have given them some of the fine thoughtfulness observable in his other productions; and Drayton some of his real though sparse vein of poetry. But neither are to be found.

The next best sonnet-writer to Shakespeare, in point of time, is Drummond of Hawthornden; and he has a value of his own. I use the old local designation in speaking of him, for we have not too many such, and it would be an especial pity in his case to let it drop, for he was a genuine lover of trees and bowers, and deserved the good fortune — rare for a poet — of possessing an estate in the bosom of them. Drummond's sonnets, for the most part, are not only of the legitimate

order, but they are the earliest in the language that breathe what may be called the habit of mind observable in the best Italian writers of sonnets; that is to say, a mixture of tenderness, elegance, love of country, seclusion, and conscious sweetness of verse. We scent his "muskèd eglantines," listen to his birds, and catch glimpses of the "sweet hermitress" whose loss he deplored. Drummond was not without the faults of prototypes inferior to those writers. His Italian scholarship in some measure seduced, as well as inspired him; but upon the whole his taste was excellent; and he leaves upon his readers the impression of an elegant-minded and affectionate man.

Drummond, though an extreme, was an honest Tory. He wrote bitterly on the crimes of the Court of James the First; though he sided vehemently with Charles in the civil wars. Milton took as vehement a part on the other side. Both these poets, however, might have met on the beautiful neutral ground of poetry, and compared sonnets and Italian books. One touch of *Sonnet* makes *all parties* kin.

If a complete specimen of the legitimate sonnet in all its demands, both of uniformity and variety, could have been expected of any English poet, Milton was the man; for he was a poet willing to show his learning; he was a musician; and he could write sonnets, as we have seen, in their native language. Yet it is remarkable that, although all the sonnets of Milton, English as well as Italian, are of the legitimate order, and, though he was an honored guest in Italy at the time when the reaction was beginning to take place in favor of its purest and best writers, he has hardly left us one in which the received

rules respecting the division of quatrain and terzettes are not broken, and the music of the whole fourteen lines merged into a strain of his own. The strains, except in one particular, are good; most of the sonnets good; some of them noble and beautiful; one of them rejoices in the recollection of "Tuscan airs," and it might be supposed that the writer would have modulated his notes accordingly, and shown what variations he could make of his own, after the Tuscan manner.

Not so. The sonnets are entirely such as I have described, with this unmusical and therefore remarkable deterioration, that they are unhappy and monotonous in their rhymes. Few of them, either English or Italian, are exempt from this fault. The two most affecting sonnets — the one on the *Massacre of Piedmont*, and that on his *Deceased Wife* — are so full of them that a writer of Spanish *asonantes* would say that they had but two rhymes throughout. The two quatrains of the latter sonnet give us no rhymes but in *a*, and the terzettes none but in *i*. (*Saint, grave, gave, faint, taint, save, have, restraint, mind, sight, shined, delight, inclined, might.*) Criticisms on rhymes appear trifling and hypercritical, and in the case of long poems would be so; but they are otherwise in respect to compositions that are at once so brief and so full of musical requirement as sonnets.

Most affecting, nevertheless, are those two sonnets; noble the one on the *Assault Intended to the City;* charming the *Invitation to Lawrence;* and masterly in passages all the rest.

"Soul-animating strains — alas! too few."

Why did not Milton write a sonnet on every cheerful,

mournful, and exalting event in his life? Why do not all poets do so? I mean, when they are not too happy or too unhappy to speak. What new and enchanting volumes of biography we should possess!

With Milton the sonnet disappeared from English poetry for nearly a hundred years. The unromantic school of French poetry, which came into England with the restoration of Charles II., put an end to that of the Italians; and the sonnet fell into such disrepute, for a still longer period, that it has not been set quite right perhaps, even yet, with the "reading public." The countenance that was given it towards the close of the last century, by sequestered scholars like Gray and Warton, availed it little. At the beginning of the century, Pope, in his "Essay on Criticism," said of a supposed despicable performance by a "person of quality,"

> "What woful stuff this madrigal would be
> In some starved hackney sonneteer, or me!"

and towards the close of the century, Johnson, sneering at Warton's poetry, — not without an insinuation against that of Gray, — says, that wheresoe'er he turns his "view,"

> "All is old and nothing new;
> Tricked in antique ruff and bonnet,
> Ode, and elegy, and sonnet."

Johnson little suspected, that before half the next century was over, his own poetry would be thought staleness itself compared with that of Gray; and as little did Pope suspect that a professed sonneteer — Wordsworth — would be looked upon by many persons as the greatest English poet since the time of Milton.

The sonnet, in truth, as a form of poetry, is disre-

spected by none but those who are unacquainted with its requirements; and had not the poets and wits of the reign of Anne been ignorant of Southern literature to a degree which is surprising, considering their love of books, — nay, had they not even been unacquainted, or at least unfamiliar, with the miscellaneous effusions of the greater English poets who preceded them, — they would have blushed to make a by-word of a species of verse which, with more or less attention to its laws, had been cultivated by all the greatest poets of Europe, those of their own nation included.

The sonnet rose again, like a transient promise in spring, or like a morning at once ruddy and weeping, in the solitary one by Gray on the death of his friend West. Wordsworth, in a spirit of hypercriticism which it is a pity he had not spared for his own sake, found fault with what he called the artificial language of this sonnet, and with the introduction of "Phœbus, lifting his golden fire." As if a man so imbued with the classics as Gray, and lamenting the loss of another man equally so imbued, whose intercourse with him was full of such images, could not speak from his heart in such language! Similar fault — which it might have been thought would have warned Wordsworth off such ungenial ground — had been found by Johnson with Milton's classical lament of a deceased friend and fellow-student, in the beautiful poem of "Lycidas." Not only did Milton and Gray speak from the heart on these occasions, but perhaps, had they not both so written, they had not spoken so well. They would not have used language so accordant with the habits of their intercourse. And the image in Gray's sonnet is beautiful for its own sake, and beautifully put: —

"In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
And reddening Phœbus lifts his golden fire."

We are too much in the habit of losing a living notion of the sun; and a little Paganism, like this, helps, or ought to help, to remind us of it. More particularly ought this to have been the case with Wordsworth, who, when it suited him, wished to have been "suckled in a creed outworn," and to have

"Sight of Proteus coming from the sea,"

rather than witness round about him the belief in nothing but every-day worldliness. "Phœbus," in this instance, is not a word out of the dictionaries, but a living celestial presence.*

* I was surprised to find the other day, in reading a passage of his *Biographia Literaria*, which had escaped my memory, that Coleridge, though he differs in other respects with the criticism of Wordsworth on Gray's sonnet, and indeed with the particular ground of objection to this line about Phœbus, finds fault with it still more severely on another, affirming that it has "almost as many faults as words." He accuses it of "incongruous images," of confusion of cause with effect, or "the real thing with the personified representative of the thing,"—in short, of difference from "the language of good sense." It is unpleasant to differ on a point of criticism with Coleridge; but I must do so in this instance, even to the extent of retorting his own words; for the charge appears to me "incongruous" with what he, as well as Wordsworth, thought of Johnson's charge against "Lycidas"; it confounds a warrantable use of the Pagan image with ordinary commonplace, assuming at the same time that the epithet "reddening" was intended to be understood in the neuter, and not the active, sense of the participle; and finally, on all these accounts, it differs from the "language of good sense." Coleridge's criticism in general was as subtle and beautiful as his poetry; and I should dissent from it in this instance with becoming diffidence, if it had not been inconsistent with its own spirit and its own letter.

Gray's sonnet is of the legitimate order, though not of the commonest. Those of Thomas Warton, who followed him, are so too; and some of them express real feelings with an elegance so scholarly, so simple, and so full of faith, that no universalist in the love of poetry who has once read them chooses to part with them.

The sonnets that appeared in England between the times of Gray and of Wordsworth are generally of a workmanship inferior to that of both. Yet the species of composition is so favorable for expressing a real feeling, whether it be a cheerful one requiring no greater compass, or a mournful one too painful to enlarge upon, that truthfulness of impulse has, in not a few instances, given permanent value to a sonnet for nothing but the general impression left by it on the reader's mind, or even for that which has been made by a single verse. The sigh, or the sweetness, of a whole life seems now and then to breathe out of a single sonnet, and readers cherish the memory of it accordingly, even when they are masters of the art. A few sonnets of Bowles's, on this account, made an indelible impression on the mind of Coleridge; and Coleridge's praises have helped them to live on. Indeed, far greater poet as he was, his own sonnets, for the most part, are inferior to those which have been selected from Bowles in the present volume.

Anna Seward was a woman of great natural abilities, spoiled by premature admiration, and by the homage of a country town; but her sonnet on rising of a winter morning to read her books, while the fire is blazing, and the white houses of her neighbors looming in the dark, comes home to everybody who has had the like experience; and the effusion is cherished accordingly.

Helen Maria Williams was another woman of great natural abilities, with a correcter taste, though her poetry is of a still more conventional cast than Miss Seward's; yet one of her sonnets made such an impression on Wordsworth that she records with a just pride his having repeated it to her, years afterwards.

Several of Charlotte Smith's sonnets — the one to the Moon in particular — are popular for their truth alone. Their powers either of invention or expression are nothing, save in the ability to reject what is false and superfluous; yet that single merit is a thing so necessary to excellence, and so rare, that everybody likes the sonnets because nobody doubts their being in earnest, and because they furnish a gentle voice to feelings that are universal.

Most of the sonnets of these ladies and of Mr. Bowles are of the illegitimate order; which consequently became such a favorite with lovers of easy writing who could string fourteen lines together, that, notwithstanding the biographies of Roscoe, and the republication of Italian poets and critics by Mr. Mathias, it continued to fill the press with heaps of bad verses, till the genius of Wordsworth succeeded in restoring the right system.

Of the world of thought, feeling, and imagination contained in the many sonnets which have enriched this class of composition from the pen of Wordsworth, so much has been said of late years by so many writers, myself among them, that to notice it further in this place might be thought superfluous. I must only beg leave to observe, that in a quotation made in Mr. Housman's "Collection of English Sonnets," from some remarks of mine on the subject, there occurs an omis-

sion of some words respecting Milton, which leaves an impression — unintended, I have no doubt — as though I considered the author of "Paradise Lost" not merely a less rich and abundant sonneteer than Wordsworth, but a less poet. On the contrary, in the midst of warm eulogies of Wordsworth, I had felt myself bound to say, that there could be no comparison in point of greatness between the genius, however fertile and admirable, manifested in his contemplative effusions, and the mighty epic-sustaining powers of Milton. I must also take this opportunity of observing, that, considering the less advanced nature, in some respects, of the times in which Milton lived, Wordsworth did not show anything like equal enlargement or independence of mind. He was too much afraid of what is called "committing himself"; and the weak and misplaced notion of strong-mindedness, which induced him to devote a portion of his sonnet-warblings to advocacy of the "punishment of death" — as though a nightingale should encourage the vigils of a hangman — was deplorable.

The sonnets of Coleridge, who, when he did his best, appears to me to have been a more thoroughly poetical, that is, purely imaginative poet than Wordsworth, are not answerable to that idea of him. Most were written in his younger days, when his style was conventional, and his genius did but reveal itself by glimpses. Yet I have retained more than half of them, partly for the sake of such glimpses, and partly because they contain other traits personally characteristical of their author.*

* In preferring Coleridge's poetry to Wordsworth's, I allude chiefly to the "Christabel" and "The Ancient Mariner." But there is also, I think, in his love-poetry a tenderness and unprosaical sim-

Of the other distinguished poets between that time and this, whom I refer to in a body because their sonnets were few, and, generally speaking, the care bestowed on them little, the only memorable ones, I think, are those extracted into the present volume, of which Keats's magnificent sonnet on *Homer* stands at the head. Shelley ought to have been a fine and abundant Sonneteer; for he was full of thought, feeling, and music. His sonnet on *Ozymandyas* has the right comprehensiveness of treatment, and perfection of close. But though he was always longing for them, he never could content himself in these sequestered corners of poetry. He was always, so to speak, for making world-wide circuits of humanity.

The sonnets extracted from Charles Lamb are happy evidences of what has been said of the desirableness of founding such compositions on special personal experience. Lamb, though a wit and humorist of an exquisite kind, was not habitually a poet. He sat at the receipt of impressions, rather than commanded them. He had not fervor enough to be a poet, not imagination or fancy enough at will, and little or no perception of music. He was the creature of nerves, and thoughts, and a trying private history which needed consolation; and his fine natural sense found it in those necessities of reaction against sorrow, which brighten wit by the contrast, and discern humors by the force of sympathy. His younger and more ambitious efforts in verse are for-

plicity, a pure unmixed feeling of (so to speak) the most limpid kind, not to be found in the troubled waters of his contemporary. In powers of poetical criticism there was no comparison between them. Coleridge's review of Wordsworth, in his *Biographia Literaria*, contains the finest lecture on the art of poetry in the language.

gotten; but who that knows does not quote lines from his "Farewell to Tobacco"; his "walking, gowned" in fancy, while visiting Cambridge; his bidding the reeds of Camus be still, while he propounded themes that might puzzle Aristotle; and his life-long India-house denunciations of

"The dry drudgery of the desk's dead wood"?

I avoid speaking of the living. I have not done so in my time; and I can still speak of them now and then in cases where only a single writer is to be considered apart from others. I cannot help seizing at this moment the opportunity that seems afforded me by the circumstance of her being the only poetess living, to indulge myself in an exception of this kind with regard to Mrs. Browning, and expressing my admiration, indeed wonder, at the marvellous beauty, dignity, delicacy, richness, the entire worthiness and loveliness of her sonnets, particularly those professing to be from the Portuguese. It is little to say of a woman of such genius, that, for anything which survives to show the contrary, she is the greatest poetess that ever existed. She is great, whether among poetesses or poets; and the greatest might have claimed her for a sister.

But when many writers of either sex are brought together in a book like this, comparisons are excited as to the "greater or less" amount of claims to distinction; and — to say nothing of other delicate points — the most generous of them might be hurt by what might seem to be the drawing to them of invidious attention. Circumstances have so conspired to perplex me in this portion of my work, that I am not sure of having selected, or even of having been able to procure, the best specimens

of some of the writers, or the very names and books of others, who have arisen in these poetical times, and whose rays are appearing above the horizon. But, as the old gentleman said when he was going to get on horseback before some ladies, my readers must count "seventy-two" before they think I could have been more active in the getting up of this book.

I had scarcely entered upon my task from the very first, when the difficulty of making the selection at all forced me on adopting a plan of restriction which, if it has often severely tried the indulgence of my own pleasure, has not only facilitated my work otherwise, but will have given the book perhaps some increase of interest, and even, for the kind of work, some portion of novelty. Of sonnets known to all the sonnet-reading world, I have omitted, I hope, none of such "exquisitest name" as they had a right to look for; but with regard to the rest, I have confined myself as much as possible to such as took a peculiar coloring from the lives and idiosyncrasies of the writers, and thus added personal to poetical interest. I have made but two exceptions to this rule, whenever I could follow it. I have admitted nothing licentious, — which is the excess of the animal nature, — and nothing superstitious, — which is the disease and desecration of the spiritual.

It should be added, that no conclusions for or against the merits of the different writers are to be drawn from the greater or less number of the sonnets extracted; the total amounts of them in their authors' pages varying extremely, from a small number to a great. Nor have I always been able to ascertain how many were written, in consequence of finding some of them in selections only.

And if I might now conclude this essay with a word of advice, which I venture to think the best possible to be given to cultivators of the Sonnet, or indeed of any kind of writing whatsoever, I would say, let a sense of the honest likings and dispositions most peculiar to themselves, whatever they may be, predominate above every other consideration in the choice of subjects *to write upon.* What we know best, we can relate best. What is truest within us, we can best utter. "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." "To be, and not to seem," is as admirable a principle for writing as for everything else. Let nobody — apart from just respect for his character — consider what would make his powers, or his inclinations, appear best in the eyes of the world. Let him think of nothing but what he can best do, — what he is fittest to do by habit and information; what he is most inclined to do for its own sake; what he feels it to be most incumbent upon him to do for conscience' sake, or for common truth's sake, or for common sense's. If he is an eagle, let him soar. If he is only a dove, what good will the attempt to soar do him? but how beautifully may he not circle the homestead. If he is a sea-bird, let him go out to sea; if a nightingale, keep to the covert; if a mocking-bird, sing of what he pleases; but then the name must be true in part only, as it is in the case of the bird, to which it does injustice: he must not only have "mockery" in him, not only the power to resemble others, but a song, in addition, of his own. If writers of verses in general were not too much addicted to hackneyed subjects, particularly those upon which they seem riding on the "high horse," the world would have many more poets than it possesses, and a great many more

charming productions. Why do not a greater number of people write? and why do not writers oftener speak "according to knowledge," whether gravely or gayly? The "shop" has been too much cried down. The fault of the poem called "The Shipwreck" is, not that it is too nautical, but too little so. I do not mean in a technical sense; for much technicality is at no time desirable; but in the homely, natural, and hearty sense; the sense that has given so much popularity to the prose writings of Smollett, Cooper, and others, and the sea-songs of Dibdin. Garth, the author of "The Dispensary," who was a physician as well as a wit, did not disdain to avail himself of his professional knowledge for the purpose of writing that satire on behalf of a charity; and much the more effective for the knowledge it was. Warton's sonnet upon his favorite pursuit, literary antiquities, was the best he wrote, and everybody admires it; but who cares for his laureate odes, or for his "Pleasures of Melancholy"? What a pity that Michel Angelo did not write artistical, instead of philosophical sonnets; and that Corelli, Scarlatti, and others, who were members of the rhyming Arcadian Society, did not tell us something, in verse, of their exquisite musical perceptions! All persons who are able to do it should give us the pleasure, in like manner, of seeing what they can best do, and what most heartily enjoy.

L. H.

AMERICAN

SONNETS AND SONNETEERS.

AMERICAN SONNETS AND SONNETEERS.

TURNING from the Italian and English sonnet-writers and their productions to the poets of America who have contributed something to the same department of verse, we feel as though we were about to pass out of a region of the most abundant and delicate bloom into a field comparatively barren and uninviting.

The same causes which have hitherto prevented the appearance in this country of any truly great poem — a poem like the masterpieces of English imagination, expressing the culture, the knowledge, the matured genius of a great nation — have operated to prevent also the cultivation of the legitimate sonnet. For the requisitions of the drama, nay, even of the epic itself, are not proportionably greater — as I think the former part of this work has proved — than the requisitions of this "little poem of fourteen lines." A perfect sonnet cannot often be dashed off "at a heat," but demanding the nicest polish, and considerable patience in its composition, the majority of our poets, influenced by the eager, restless

spirit of their age, neglect it altogether, to embody their conceptions in more obvious and popular forms.

Unwilling to trust to the remote awards of posterity, tinged with the materialism, and sharing the intense unrest of his people, the American poet has seldom, like Coleridge, looked upon his art as "its own exceeding great reward," nor has he been content to live and work as a poet only. Even where no constraining necessity exists, we find him in the ranks of some practical profession, devoting, in all probability, the best portion of his energies to labors which unfit him for the pursuit of the highest purposes of his art.

It is not thus with the painter and sculptor: why should it be with the poet? If he be poor, — and alas! genius and poverty, married ages ago, seem, notwithstanding their conjugal incompatibility to have no chance of a divorce, — the reason is plain enough; but what if he be rich, or possessed of a competence? Would it not be wiser in one thus circumstanced, feeling the "divine impulsion" within him, to labor serenely and with singleness of aim in his vocation, disregarding the transient fashions of his time, and slowly building up unto perfection poems with the pith of immortality in them.

Had this been done, we might not now have been destitute of THE great American poem, whatever its metrical form, concerning which so many prophecies have been ventured upon, and so much premature enthusiasm expended.

At all events, our literature would have been richer in poetry of a much higher stamp than that which at present distinguishes it. I feel assured that the Sonnet especially would have been amply and beautifully represented;

that anybody undertaking the task which now employs me, instead of experiencing a sentiment akin to mortification, as he compares the sonnets by his countrymen — not few in numbers, but careless in structure, and often commonplace in thought and design — with the masterly performances of this kind which adorn the literature of England and the Continent, would, on the contrary, have had every reason to be proud of the national achievements in an admirable and unique branch of art.

As it is, the American poet, under the conditions implied, circumscribed in his efforts, and democratic in his principles, has been satisfied with the production of verses which, for the most part, are easily written and quite as easily read. He addresses the masses, not a select circle of scholars, — the audience coveted by Milton, "fit, though few." The complex in thought and rhythm he has had apparently neither the leisure nor the inclination to cultivate. True, since the advent of Edgar A. Poe, whose influence on the poetry of the country was marked and peculiar, a taste for labored eccentricities of metrical mechanism has repeatedly displayed itself; but it has been confined to a host of imitators, — the poetasters of gazettes and magazines.

The architectural eccentricities of Poe's system of versification it was not difficult to copy; and we have, in consequence, during the last decade, been tormented by legions of illegitimate "Ravens," and been invited to enter so prodigious a number of "Haunted Palaces," that they may really be said to compose a municipality of their own, governed by a genius of grotesque *diablerie*.

Perhaps a better mode could not be found of bringing certain classes of the literary public to a clear perception

of what is the true and beautiful in poetic art, than by calling them to the candid study of such sonnets as those of Wordsworth in English, and of George H. Boker in American literature.

While the ear, if moderately correct, would be charmed by their rhythmical harmony, the pleasure derived from them, instead of evaporating in a sensuous delight, would be intensified by the communication of those "grave thoughts, great thoughts," which are seldom more striking and effective than when delivered through the medium of a sonnet worthy the name.

My business, however, is not to regret that the legitimate sonnet has been neglected amongst us, nor yet to suggest a remedy for depraved literary taste, but to give as detailed a narrative of the earliest appearance and of the progress of the sonnet in America as my scanty materials will allow.

The first American sonnet was written — at what precise date I have no means of ascertaining — by David Humphreys, LL. D., who was born at Denby, Connecticut, in 1753. He ranks among our Revolutionary heroes, and was educated at Yale College, with Barlow, Dwight, Trumbull, and others of historical fame.

Griswold, in the "Poets and Poetry of America," informs us that, soon after being graduated, in 1771, he joined the army under General Parsons, with the rank of captain. He was for several years attached to the staff of Putnam, and in 1780 was appointed aid to General Washington. He continued in the military family of the Commander-in-Chief until the close of the war, when he went abroad with Franklin, Adams, and Jefferson, as one of the commissioners appointed to negotiate treaties of commerce with foreign powers.

On his return to the United States, in 1786, he renewed his intimacy with his old friends, the authors of the "Columbiad" and "McFingal," and with Dr. Samuel Hopkins, with whom he engaged in writing the "Anarchiad," a political satire, in imitation of the "Rolliad," a work attributed to Sheridan and others, which he had seen in London.

Colonel Humphreys subsequently filled many military and diplomatic offices. He died at New Haven, in February, 1818, at the age of sixty-five.

An interest attaches to the first known sonnet produced by an American author, as well as to the author himself, entirely independent of the artistic merits of the one, or the amount of poetical genius possessed by the other. Colonel Humphreys's sonnet, however, on the subject of "The Soul," is by no means a contemptible performance. It shows the writer to have been a clever versifier, and a correct thinker. Its conclusion, particularly, is stately and sonorous. One other sonnet by him has come down to us, in the form of an address to the Prince of Brazil, whose acquaintance Colonel Humphreys made during his residence as Minister in Lisbon. It bears the date of July, 1797, and is a manly, unaffected effusion, expressed in scholarly terms, and with some musical and rhythmic facility.*

* The principal poems of Colonel Humphreys are "An Address to the Armies of the United States," written in 1772; a poem on "The Happiness of America," written during his residence in London and Paris; "The Widow of Malabar, or the Tyranny of Custom"; and lastly, a "Poem on Agriculture." His "Miscellaneous Works" were published (in octavo) in New York City, first in 1790, and again in 1808. As regards his style, "he seems to have aimed only at an elegant mediocrity, and his pieces are generally simple and correct in thought and language." (Griswold's "Poets and Poetry of America.")

The next American sonnets, in the order of time, are those by Richard B. Davies, a native of New York, who died when quite a young man, in 1799; and those by Robert Treat Paine, a poetaster, famous in his generation, whose verses have long since deservedly sunk into oblivion. His sonnets, like everything else he wrote, are formal and lifeless, though ambitious. No feeling more intense than vanity seems to have inspired them, and in execution they lack both taste and imaginative force. I have reproduced them, together with the sonnets of Paine's immediate predecessor, Davies, as literary curiosities only.

From the period at which we have now arrived to the rise of those generally considered the fathers of our poetic literature, namely, Allston, Dana, Bryant, Longfellow, etc., I have been unable to find, after consulting all the sources at my command, a single sonnet, good, bad, or indifferent.* It is therefore with the sonnets

* Since the above was written, I have accidentally discovered in the columns of the old Charleston "City Gazette and Daily Advertiser," for Wednesday, February 14, 1798, an original sonnet, signed W. R., and no doubt intended as a valentine. It reads thus: —

"They tell me that in opening life the hue
Of rosy health bloomed on my glowing cheek;
That my full eye sparkled with liquid blue,
And seemed with strong intelligence to speak:

"They tell me too, that in luxuriance wild
Waved my dark locks; perchance they tell me truth,
For 't is an adage that the loveliest child
Makes in advancing age the sorrier youth.

"So has it been with me; — in vain I seek
To trace the roseate hue of healthful red;
Dull is my eye, and colorless my cheek,
And gone the flowing honors of my head;

"But still remains unchanged my better part,
Still true to love and Laura is my heart!"

of Washington Allston that our critical task properly begins.

One would have supposed that a man of Allston's delicate and true feeling for beauty, his fine yet vigorous imagination, and the opportunities he enjoyed of studying Italian poetry among the scenes and associations that gave it birth and passionate life, would naturally have shown some partiality for the sonnet in its highest, most artistic forms. When, however, we examine the few sonnets he has left us, we are disappointed, not merely in the paucity of their numbers, but in their want of constructive care.

The thought is always appropriate, often suggestive, occasionally full of the insight and force of imagination characteristic of the writer in his happiest moods; but the same sort of dissatisfaction which Mr. Hunt expresses while reverting to the sonnets of Milton is apt to be felt, I think, after an impartial perusal of those by Allston. He could have done so much better, had he willed it. His genius, endowed with the constructive faculty, might have found herein one of its fittest modes of strictly poetical expression; and, indeed, after very just deduction from the merits of his sonnets, as they now remain, they are perhaps the best specimens of his poetic works.

The sonnets by William Cullen Bryant are only four in number. Of these, the subjects have been drawn chiefly from impressive aspects of the natural world, associated with the moral ideas and feelings of which such aspects are suggestive. They are delicate and beautiful productions; belonging, it is true, to the illegitimate school, yet so thoroughly possessed by "the laconic soul of the sonnet" that none but a hypercritical reader would

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pause to note the defect of form. Nevertheless, turning hypercritical ourselves for the moment, we venture to hint how much all Bryant's sonnets would have gained in melody, if the concluding terzettos had not invariably been burdened by a couplet. The effect of such a close, even in sonnets in other respects perfect, is to give an incongruous tone to the versification, very much resembling the discord that would follow upon the introduction of a deep bass note at the end of a lyric that should be sung throughout in tenor. As for the sentiment, the fancy, the genuine philosophical perception of Bryant's sonnets, they could hardly be overrated.

In a somewhat different strain are the sonnets of Longfellow. As might have been anticipated from the peculiar genius and culture of the poet, they have generally adapted themselves to the legitimate model, and are, moreover, admirable specimens of a rare descriptive power and picturesque imagination. The too frequent desire to illustrate by material images and comparisons what is abstract in thought and emotion — as when, for example, the "stern thoughts and awful" of the Florentine are likened to "Farinata rising from his fiery tomb" — constitutes, perhaps, the only reasonable objection that can be brought as an offset to their unquestionable grace, purity, and "purple richness" of diction. For gorgeousness of color and language "The Evening Star" is remarkable.

"THE EVENING STAR.

"Lo! in the painted oriel of the West,
Whose panes the sunken sun incarnadines,
Like a fair lady at her casement shines
The evening star, — the star of love and rest!

And then anon, she doth herself divest
Of all her radiant garments, and reclines
Behind the sombre screen of yonder pines,
With slumber and soft dreams of love oppressed:
O my beloved! my sweet Hesperus!
My morning and my evening star of love!
My best and gentlest lady! even thus,
As that fair planet in the sky above,
Dost thou retire unto thy rest at night,
And from thy darkened window fades the light."

In the last edition of Percival's Poems there are many sonnets of merit. It surprised me to remark the general finish and grace of their execution; for the author's impulsive fancy, ready command of language, and, I may add, false principles of art, have caused him in the majority of his works to err on the score of diffuseness, and a careless ease of manner and expression. He says himself, in one of his prefaces, that his "verse is very far from bearing the marks of the file and burnisher"; and that he likes "to see poetry in the full ebullition of feeling and fancy, foaming up with the spirit of life, and glowing with the rainbows of a glad inspiration."

Believing thus in original genius, unrestrained and unmodified by the moulding powers of art, it is not astonishing that Percival should have left so little poetry — considering of course the quantity of verse he has published — that is likely long to survive him.

His sonnets are beautiful productions. Illegitimate in form, they yet show a true conception of what the sonnet ought to be, in tone, general structure, and character of melody. In several cases the poet has invented a form of his own, by a novel and a not ineffective disposition of rhymes, as, for example, in the following: —

"O, there are moments when the dreaming soul
Forgets the earth, and wanders far away
Into some region of eternal day,
Where the bright waves in calm and sunshine roll!

"Thither it wanders, and has reached a goal; —
The good, the great, the beautiful, are there,
And wreaths of victory crown their flowing hair;
And as they move, such music fills the air
As ne'er from fabled bower or cavern stole.

"Soft to the heart it winds, and hushes deep
Its cares and sorrows. Thought then, fancy-free,
Flies on from bliss to bliss, till, finding thee,
It pauses, as the musk-rose charms the bee,
Tranced as in happy dream of magic sleep."

The finest of Percival's sonnets are the purely descriptive. To him the glories of Nature never appealed in vain. They were

"His inspiration and his deep delight."

When fully possessed by his theme, this poet, like Wordsworth, and some of the earlier English sonneteers, employs the sonnet as a stanza, as in the admirable poem beginning,

"I stand upon the mountains 'mid a sea";

and also the series of six sonnets on the subject of his love, which form a connected composition of exquisite tenderness and feeling. Regarded by itself, the sonnet with which this performance opens is the most perfect in every respect of Percival's minor poems. In the delicate elaborateness of its structure, moulded upon the strictest Petrarcian model, in its melodious rhythmical flow, and subtle earnestness of passion, it is alone a sufficing answer to those who maintain that the English

Sonnet is adapted solely to topics of a sublime and tragic, or, at all events, of a wholly solemn nature. I quote it entire, and beg the reader to note how successful the author has been in the rather dangerous experiment of changing his rhymes to dissyllables in the terzettos.

"If on the clustering curls of thy dark hair,
And the pure arching of thy polished brow,
We only gaze, we fondly dream that thou
Art one of those bright ministers who bear,
Along the cloudless bosom of the air,
Sweet, solemn words, to which our spirits bow,—
With such a holy smile thou lookest now,
And art so soft and delicately fair.
A veil of tender light is mantling o'er thee;
Around thy opening lips young loves are playing,
And crowds of youths, in passionate thought delaying,
Pause, as thou movest by them, to adore thee;
By many a sudden blush and tear betraying
How the heart trembles when it bends before thee!"

Percival was not merely a poet. He was an accomplished linguist and *savant*. His special scientific attainments procured for him the office of State Geologist of Connecticut. It was probably when he first determined to devote his time and labor to geological researches that the following sonnet was written:—

"Now to my task! — be firm, — the work requires
Cool reason, deep reflection; — and the glow
Of heart that pours itself in restless flow
Must sleep, and fancy quench her beaming fires,
And all my longings, hopes, and wild desires
Must seek their slumberous pillow, and be still;
But energy must mantle o'er my will,
And give the patient toil that never tires;
For Nature stands before me, and invites

My spirit to her sanctuary, and draws
Aside her pictured veil from where she writes
In living letters her eternal laws;
And as I stand amid the countless wheels
That roll the car of being on its way,
A deep serene my silent bosom feels,
I seem a portion of the viewless ray,
And o'er me flows the light of pure, unfading day."

The writings of Halleck and Richard Henry Dana are destitute of sonnets. So far as Mr. Dana is concerned, we regret the fact, because we think him endowed with those peculiar qualities of intellect and heart which enter into the composition of all the higher order of sonneteers. The union in his nature of the elements of idealism and deep thoughtfulness of character, resulting in a chastened intellectual and moral power, is precisely that union of forces which finds a fitting manifestation and embodiment in the sonnets of Wordsworth, and other poets whose mental structure resembles his.

I have thought it right to bestow thus much consideration upon our elder and best known poets, although none of them — not even Percival — are to be looked upon as professed sonneteers.

I now come to a late period of our literature, which, fortunately for us, exhibits some specimens of the sonnet that would do no discredit to the art, taste, and genius of the classic writers of Italy and Great Britain.

Abandoning anything like an attempt at chronological order, I shall in the first place introduce to the reader those — very few in number — who have earned the right to be called Legitimate Sonneteers; and, secondly, those — *not* so few in number — who have practised, with more

or less success, the diverse forms of the illegitimate sonnet.

Among the former class, George H. Boker, of Philadelphia, better known as a dramatist of great merit,* deserves in my judgment the most prominent position. His sonnets (seventy-eight of which appear in the second volume of his "Plays and Poems," published by Messrs. Ticknor and Fields, Boston, 1856) are, with hardly an exception, composed in accordance with the established Italian rule. Wordsworth himself was not more scrupulous in following the classical standards.

But Mr. Boker has not pursued a conventional system of versification from any blind reverence for authority, but because of the evident sincerity of his faith in the variety, flexibility, and beauty of the English tongue. With those, indeed, who are accustomed only to the more prominent rhymes, and the more marked forms of verse, the melody of these sonnets may often fall as on a dull ear. But to a cultivated taste, and to the secret sense of hearing, apt for the music of poetry, we would cheerfully commit almost any one of Mr. Boker's sonnets, without an apprehension that the sweetness and variety of its harmony would pass unheeded. He has vindicated the

* Mr. Boker has achieved signal success in both departments of the drama. His comedies are easy and sparkling, but it is in the more difficult walk of the Tragic Muse that his strength is best displayed. "Francesca da Rimini" and "Leonor de Guzman" are magnificent efforts, — far better, we think, than any other tragedies of modern times. In them the author shows his profound knowledge of the human heart, with its sentiments and passions, its love, rage, jealousy, ambition, despair. In them, too, he charms us with the beauty and harmony of poetic diction, or rouses us with eloquence of the highest order.

justness of his views, by the production of sonnets as perfect in structure as they are instinct with thought and beauty.

Mr. Boker's sonnets may be divided into three general classes : first, the political sonnets, or those which treat of topics nationally important ; second, the philosophical ; and third, the love-sonnets. There are also sonnets of a miscellaneous kind.

Of the political sonnets, it may be fairly said, that they are full of a vigorous spirit, hardihood, and energy. Never overstepping the modesty of Nature, and always with "a reserve of power in their passionate expression," they appeal to the enthusiasm that is latent in all healthful blood, quickening the pulse, enlivening the brain, and imparting the heat of a fine lyrical fire to every impulsive or susceptible nature. "What!" the poet exclaims, referring doubtless to some period in our history when the fear prevailed of a European invasion, —

> "What! cringe to Europe! Band it all in one,
> Stilt its decrepit strength, renew its age,
> Wipe out its debts, contract a loan to wage
> Its venal battles, — and by yon bright sun,
> Our God is false, and Liberty undone,
> If slaves have power to win your heritage!
> Look on your country! God's appointed stage,
> Where man's vast mind its boundless race shall run.
> For that it was your stormy coast He spread, —
> A fear in winter, — girded you about
> With granite hills, and made you strong and dread.
> *Let him who fears before the foemen shout,*
> *Or gives an inch before a vein has bled,*
> *Turn on himself, and let the traitor out!*"

What an honest ring and strength of indignation in these last three lines! The scorn seems to be a vital

thing, smiting like a blow in the face the cowards whose supposed treachery has roused the poet's anger! The subject is continued thus: —

"What though the cities blaze, the ports be sealed,
The fields untilled, the hand of labor still,
Ay, every arm of commerce and of skill
Palsied and broken; shall we therefore yield,
Break up the sword, put by the dintless shield?
Have we no home upon the wooded hill,
That mocks a siege? No patriot ranks to drill?
No nobler labor in the battle-field?
Or grant us beaten. While we gather might,
Is there no comfort in the solemn wood?
No cataracts whose angry roar shall smite
Our hearts with courage? No eternal brood
Of thoughts begotten by the eagle's flight?
No God to strengthen us in solitude?"

The italicized parts of this sonnet are assuredly very striking, breathing as they do the noblest spirit of resistance to invasion, and drawing significant incentives for unyielding action from "the angry roar of the cataract," and the "eternal thoughts" begotten by the flight of eagles.

None of Mr. Boker's sonnets, whatever the subject, are without a firm "body of thought." Having mastered his idea, he clothes it with language "simple, sensuous, passionate," developing its cognate relations with a clear, logical sequence, an admirable appropriateness of illustration, which give to his poems in this form the charm of great natural force, directness, and lucidity.

From his philosophical sonnets we have only space to quote the ensuing, directed against that "hollow fraud" of consolation which professes to extract from *all* grief some precious healing balm: —

"Dear is the fruit of sorrow, priceless store
Comes from the hand of grief, as sages tell;
Seeking for comfort in the woes that swell
Our hearts to bursting; with fore-gathered lore
Lulling the fears that make a gloom before
Our onward tread. Ah, hollow fraud! As well
Speak truth, and say, — 'We healed mishaps that fell
By their own issue, as with running gore
A wound is healed'; but lo! the lasting scar!
We make the best of man's dark destiny
By self-deceit, while hopes and pleasures flee
Before our vision; till the latest star
Fades in the dawn of knowledge, and we see
Earth, like a joyless desert, stretch afar."

Whatever merits — and I have said they are many and peculiar — Mr. Boker's sonnets may possess, I am disposed to rank his love-sonnets first. Though each is a perfect lyric in itself, they form altogether an elaborate poem, connected by the one bright thread of passionate and tender associations. The author has infused into them the aroma of the sonneteers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, —

"The spacious times of great Elizabeth."

The quaintness bordering on conceit, but never degenerating into affectation; the air of devoted self-abnegation and abstraction, half sensuous, half metaphysical; the terse verbal felicities, — all serve to remind us of Wyatt, Sidney, and Spenser. Steeped in the flush and spring-time of youth, these sonnets suggest the "hey-day" of the blood, that delicious season when, according to Charles Lamb, 'true love thinks no labor to send out thoughts upon the vast, and more than Indian voyages, to bring home rich pearls, outlandish wealth, gems, jewels,

and spicery, to sacrifice in self-depreciatory similitudes, as shadows of true amiabilities, to the Beloved." They are full of the tender gallantry of the old cavalier lyrists, — a gallantry the result of chivalric sentiment, touched by a certain grace of euphuism, which in its very exaggeration we feel to be possessed by the noblest elements of courtly sincerity.

It is impossible to read such sonnets without marvelling at the manner in which their author has identified himself in spirit with the great models he has chosen. For example, might not the following sonnet be mistaken — so far as the cast of thought and the nature of the imagery are concerned — for an amatory sonnet by Spenser, nay, by Spenser's master?

"Either the sum of this sweet mutiny
Amongst thy features argues me some harm,
Or else they practise wicked treachery
Against themselves, thy heart, and hapless me.
For as I start aside with blank alarm,
Dreading the glitter which begins to arm
Thy clouded brows, lo! from thy lips I see
A smile come stealing, like a loaded bee,
Heavy with sweets and perfumes, all ablaze
With soft reflections from the flowery wall
Whereon it pauses. Yet I will not raise
One question more, let smile or frown befall,
Taxing thy love where I should only praise,
And asking changes, that might change thee all."

Still more striking an instance is at hand: —

"*I 'll call thy frown a headsman, passing grim,*
Walking before some wretch foredoomed to death,
Who counts the pantings of his own hard breath;
Wondering how heart can beat, or steadfast limb
Bear its sad burden to life's awful brim.

I 'll call thy smile a priest, who slowly saith
Soft words of comfort as the sinner strayeth
Away in thought, or sings a holy hymn,
Full of rich promise, as he walks behind
The fatal axe with face of goodly cheer,
And kind inclinings of his saintly ear.
So, love, thou seest, in smiles or looks unkind,
Some taste of sweet philosophy I find,
That seasons all things in our little sphere."

The fantastic, but ingenious similes which render this sonnet a curiosity in its way, derive their parentage from the poetical vocabulary of Sidney and Shakespeare. Indeed, the more minutely we examine this portion of Mr. Boker's writings, the stronger does the proof become of the enthusiasm with which he has thrown himself into the study of Elizabethan literature. It is refreshing to meet at this time, and in America too, with an author so vigorous, natural, and *English*. The solid richness of Mr. Boker's imagination, his discreet judgment, large command of expression, and manly sensibility to what is beautiful and true in the nature *without*, and the passionate heart *within* us, are nowhere exemplified to so great an extent as in his sonnets.

Of the beauties of thought and diction scattered all over them, let me collect and comment upon a few. The possible decay of love is thus described :—

"Thou dost confess my love will ever be,
And only fear its strength may waste away,
Dropping its blossoms as the seasons flee,
Or, like the evening of a boreal day,
In lingering twilight stretch its sullen ray,
And on the edge of night hang doubtfully."

There is something very impressive in this comparison of waning love to the "evening of a boreal day," —

"That on the edge of night hangs doubtfully."

All its associations are in keeping with the nature of the "fear" it typifies, — desolation, loneliness, intolerable cold, and solitude made the more awful by the mockery of light. Thus it is that the poet, the interpreter of life's mystery and passion, by a single suggestive image or simile, defines the most complex conditions of feeling, or reveals to their depths the emotional phenomena of the soul!

In a description of opening Spring, we have some lines which partake of the animated picturesqueness of Chaucer: —

"Lo! Winter sweeps away
His snowy skirts, and leaves the landscape gay
With early verdure; and there's merry cheer
Among the violets, where the sun lies clear
On the south hillsides."

Of the affectation of a backward and somewhat cold mistress, whose "vague words and shy looks never touch the heart," it is said: —

"Alas! alas! that reason only proves
A fact your cautious action never tells,
That I must reach my joy by slow removes,
And guess at love as at the oracles!"

We must here take leave of Mr. Boker, satisfied that enough has been said and quoted to justify the high estimation we have placed upon his sonnets; but equally satisfied that their merits can only be appreciated to the full by the reader after a close study of the poems themselves.

The sonnets of James Russell Lowell are chiefly, like the foregoing, legitimate; but they cannot, like them, be divided into particular classes, because of their miscella-

neous character. They treat a variety of subjects, and are distinguished for subtle thoughtfulness, sensibility, and a delicate grace of imagination. The love-sonnets, of which he has written a few, contrast remarkably with those by Mr. Boker; for they celebrate an *assured* affection, an affection placed above the throes of doubt, jealousy, passion, and are exquisitely earnest and confiding. Although of a subjective tendency — as such poems *must* be — they have the merits of an enlarged suggestiveness and reflection, whereby the special love of the individual is made significant of love itself; and a moral of universal force and value is elicited from a personal experience.

Here is the last of a trio of sonnets, which partially illustrates what we mean: —

"I would not have this perfect love of ours
Grow from a single root, a single stem,
Bearing no goodly fruit, but only flowers
That idly hide life's iron diadem:
It should grow alway, like that Eastern tree
Whose limbs take root, and spread forth constantly;
That love for one, from which there doth not spring
Wide love for all, is but a worthless thing.
Not in another world, as poets prate,
Dwell we apart above the tide of things,
High floating o'er earth's clouds on faery wings;
But our pure love doth ever elevate
Into a holy band of brotherhood
All earthly things, making them pure and good."*

The real secret of cynicism, the reason why so many

* This is one of the few *illegitimate* sonnets contained in Mr. Lowell's works. I quote it in consideration of its present appropriateness.

of us exclaim against human nature as wholly evil and ignoble, is well set forth in the sonnet beginning, —

"For this true nobleness I seek in vain!"

The cynic is counselled to "look *inward*," — to look into the depths of his own soul.

"How is it with thee? art thou sound and whole?
Doth narrow search show thee no earthly stain?
BE NOBLE! *and the nobleness that lies*
In other men, sleeping, but never dead,
Will rise in majesty to meet thine own:
Then wilt thou see it gleam in many eyes,
Then will pure light around thy path be shed,
And thou wilt nevermore be sad and lone."

Mr. Lowell's sonnet to "The Spirit of Keats" I must indulge myself and the reader in quoting entire: —

"Great soul! thou sittest with me in my room,
Uplifting me with thy vast, quiet eyes,
On whose full orbs with kindly lustre lies
The twilight warmth of ruddy ember-gloom:
Thy clear strong tones will oft bring sudden bloom
Of hope secure, to him who lonely cries,
Wrestling with the young poet's agonies,
Neglect and scorn which seem a certain doom:
Yes! the few words *which, like great thunder-drops,*
Thy large heart down to earth shook doubtfully,
Thrilled by the inward lightning of its might,
Serene and pure like gushing joy of light,
Shall track the eternal chords of destiny
After the moon-led pulse of ocean stops."

Not only grand as a sonnet, but truthful as a criticism! The electric suggestiveness of which poetry is capable is admirably shown in the first terzetto, and it is worth pages of tame prose disquisition. Almost every phrase is typical, comprising a picture of not merely some pecu-

liar trait of Keats's character and genius, but by its emphatic appropriateness bringing vividly to sight the whole man, as man and as artist. The prominent features of Lowell's sonnets may be briefly summed up, as extreme sensibility to moral and spiritual beauty; imagination, not so bright in its coloring, as clear, defined, harmonious in its outlines; insight, metaphysically acute; and, finally, in their mechanical construction, a degree of care and scholarly finish, which we often fail to perceive in his other and longer poems.

Of the American writers of the *illegitimate* sonnet, in its countless multiplicity of forms, I do not think it necessary to speak at length. Their number, as intimated, is considerable; but their productions exhibit, on the whole, so little saliency, that I shrink from the task of individually criticising, or attempting to criticise them, that is to say elaborately.* It is, however, essential to my plan that something should be said, in a cursory way, of the merits and demerits of these authors.

Mr. George Hill — a native, Mr. Griswold tells me, of Guilford on Long Island Sound, and an eminent graduate of Yale College — is, I believe, the eldest of them. The style of his poetry, as exemplified in his dramatic piece, called "Titania," and in a poem on the "Ruins of Athens," — in the Spenserean stanza, — justifies Griswold in terming it "severe"; but Mr. Hill's sonnets are somewhat loosely composed; and, moreover, they lack originality, both in the subjects selected and in the poet's mode of treating them.

* Our Female Sonneteers I have grouped together in the latter part of the work, not from discourtesy to them, but because the material needed for the preparation of that portion of my essay reached me last, and after my work was almost completed.

Mr. Jones Very, known as having formerly filled the post of Tutor in Greek in Harvard College, is responsible for a larger number of sonnets than any other writer of New England. Mr. Very is also the author of three essays, — on "Epic Poetry," "Shakespeare," and "Hamlet." They are "fine specimens of learned and sympathetic criticism." His sonnets appeared in a collection of his works in prose and verse, issued in 1839, and belong to the extreme conventional type of the illegitimate sonnet.

Mr. Very's tone is deeply devotional. No matter what his topic, he unconsciously imbues it with the religious sentiment. The old metaphysical rhapsodists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, such as Donne, Herbert, Vaughn, &c., are evidently his poetical models. He has studied them with faithful attention, and has reproduced their style, more in its faults, however, than in its excellences. Donne, I take it, is his favorite. He could not, in many respects, have chosen a worse master. Mr. Very shows no real power of invention, and his "range of subjects," like his range of thought, is "limited." Nevertheless, in his highest moods, he is sincere, tender, fanciful; and the flow of his verse, though at one time monotonous, at another involved, is for the most part musical and pleasing. Nevertheless, his great fault, as a sonneteer, is a vague mysticism of reflection, encouraged by, if not absolutely derived from, his too familiar acquaintance with the poets we have mentioned. The sonnets which bear his name in this collection have been chosen because of their freedom from this characteristic obscurity.

Mr. Park Benjamin was the first American, so far as I

can learn, who employed the sonnet as a vehicle of humorous description.* A keen sense of the absurd and *bizarre* is displayed in the following : —

"To see a fellow of a summer's morning,
With a large fox-hound of a slumberous eye,
And a slim gun, go slowly lounging by,
About to give the feathered bipeds warning,
That probably they may be shot hereafter,
Excites in me a quiet kind of laughter ;
For though I am no lover of the sport
Of harmless murder, yet it is to me
Almost the funniest thing on earth to see
A corpulent person breathing with a snort,
Go on a shooting frolic all alone ;
For well I know that when he 's out of town,
He, and his dog, and gun will all lie down,
And undestructive sleep till game and light are flown ! "

* Unless we consider the following, by Robert Treat Paine, as an attempt in the same style : —

"SONNET TO ELIZA.

"Ah ! do the Muses, once so coy and shy,
Pursue Menander as hard as legs can lay ?
By heavens ! Menander swears, he will not fly,
But meet their gentle ladyships half-way.

"What ! shall this coward bard turn pale with fear ?
When clinging round his knees these virgins lie,
Is he afraid of drowning in a tear,
Or being blown to atoms by a sigh ?

"No, dear Eliza, with expanded arms
I turn to clasp the fair one that pursues ;
But, struck with such divinity of charms,
Shrink from alliance with so bright a muse.

"Yet weep not, that from Hymen's yoke I 've slipped my neck,
For you 've escaped a bite, while I have lost a spec."

This is not, however, a characteristic sonnet. There are others among the few Mr. Benjamin has written which — beside being more nearly adapted to the right sonnet-form — are, in themselves, clever and thoughtful poems. Here is one of them, addressed simply to

"M. J.

"Born in the North, and reared in tropic lands;
Her mind has all the vigor of a tree
Sprung from a rocky soil beside the sea,
And all the sweetness of a rose that stands
In the soft sunshine on some sheltered lea.
She seems all life, and light, and love to me!
No winter lingers in her glowing smile,
No coldness in her deep melodious words;
But all the warmth of her dear Indian isle,
And all the music of its tuneful birds.
With her conversing of my native bowers
In the far South, I feel the genial air
Of some delicious morn, and taste those flowers,
Which like herself are bright above compare!"

The sonnet to "A Great Name" has just escaped fulfilling all the conditions necessary to a sonnet of the strictly legitimate type: —

"Time! thou destroyest the relics of the Past!
And hidest all the footprints of thy march,
On sheltered column, and on crumbled arch,
By moss, and ivy growing green and fast:
Hurled into fragments by the tempest blast,
The Rhodian monster lies; — the Obelisk
That with sharp line divided the broad disk
Of Egypt's sun, down to the sands was cast;
And where these stood, no remnant trophy stands,
And even the art is lost by which they rose;
Thus with the monuments of other lands,
The place that knew them now no longer knows; —
Yet triumph not, O Time! strong towers decay,
But a great Name shall never pass away!"

The sonnets of William H. Burleigh "possess," as Leigh Hunt says of Shelley's "Ozymandias," "the right comprehensiveness," and I have doubted — their structure is in some cases so correct — whether they might not be fairly ranked among the legitimate sonnets. "The Brook," and "Solitude," both to be found among our selections, will justify this remark.

The most original and salient of the irregular sonneteers of the South is William Gilmore Simms, whose fertile genius has contributed so much to the vindication of the intellect and patriotism of his part of the country. His sonnets are numerous and of every variety of construction. Their chief merit resides in the character of the thought, which is seldom otherwise than strong, suggestive, and perspicuous. A rugged and impetuous power, and, where the topic admits of it, a passionate intensity of feeling, rising almost into vehemence, leave the author no time to consider the "proprieties of verse"; he rushes on with the energy of the improvvisatore, so that frequently he constrains himself to make use of the sonnet as a stanza, the limit of fourteen lines appearing to be insufficient to the full exercise either of his imagination or his enthusiasm. Yet many of his sonnets are complete and "rounded," possessing a fine metrical balance, and leaving consequently little to desire in reference to their construction. The following is a good example: —

"Sudden the mighty nation goes not down;
There is no mortal fleetness in its fate: —
Time, many omens, still anticipate
The peril that removes its iron crown
And shakes its homes with ruin. Centuries
Fleet by in the long struggle, and great men
Rush mounted to the break where victory lies,
And personal virtue brings us life again.

Were it not thus, my Country! were this hope
Not ours, the present were a fearful time;
Vainly we summon mighty hearts to cope
With thy oppressors, — vanity and crime.
These ride thee as upon some noble beast,
The scoundrel jackal hurrying to his feast."

Mr. Simms in the choice of his subjects adheres mostly to the gravest themes. The solemn or fearful aspects of national events, the dark mysteries of human fate and experience, — demanding in their consideration the exercise of the metaphysical faculty, — these are the burden of his sonnets.

"The thing," as Wordsworth expresses it, becomes "a trumpet in his hands," — when he would awaken the dormant patriotism of his people; or it serves him as the medium of philosophical inquiry in those regions of speculation which only imagination, sublimated by faith, should dare to enter."

In a word, the sonnets of this writer are valuable, not as matured art-products, but as stern embodiments of individual will and passion, no less than as specimens of genuine subtlety and reach of thought.

Henry T. Tuckerman is the author of about twenty-eight sonnets of a miscellaneous nature, written in the form of three quatrains, concluded by the usual heroic couplet. Griswold says that "Mr. Tuckerman's sonnets display some of the most perfect examples of that kind of writing that adorn American literature." I cannot subscribe to this assertion, which proves how superficial Griswold's knowledge of the sonnet, and its requirements, must have been; nor do I believe that Mr. Tuckerman himself — whose candor as a critic equals his ability — will quarrel with me for denying it. Let us

admit, however, that his sonnets, if not worthy this degree of praise, are unquestionably graceful, polished, and pleasing compositions. Every line seems to have been carefully revised, and the ultimate effect is a Pope-like ease and flow of rhythm, and great propriety of diction, not without a special charm of their own. I call the reader's special attention to the sonnets entitled "To One Deceived," "Freedom," "Sleep," and "The Balcony," — all included in this work, and all confirming, I think, what has been said.

Mr. Epes Sargent, in his "Summer Voyage to Cuba," has employed a stanza of fourteen lines, the last line of which is invariably a rhymed Alexandrine, — which brings his stanzas technically under the head of the most irregular of quatorzens. Some of them are so picturesque that I have thought proper to extract them into our volume.

The younger poets of America, who have won distinction in other departments of their art, — I refer here particularly to Bayard Taylor, Aldrich, and Stoddard, — have published few sonnets, but those few are meritorious. I instance Taylor's manly and earnest dedication to George H. Boker, which introduces his "Poems of Home and Travel," — a sonnet not unworthy of Boker himself; also his sonnet to "Life," and "To the Mountains."

Since this essay was planned and almost executed, Mr. T. B. Aldrich has risen so rapidly into poetical fame, through the deserved honors bestowed upon him both in this country and in England, that I would call particular attention to such of his sonnets as I have quoted from his "Poems," published by Messrs. Ticknor and Fields in 1865. Hitherto Mr. Aldrich has been distinguished for the exquisite beauty of his lyrics, and the grand passages

to be found in his Scriptural poem of "Judith," rather than for any achievements in the peculiar and difficult branch of poetry of which I treat. I think, however, that a careful consideration of the sonnets hereafter quoted will convince the reader that Mr. Aldrich occupies no second rank amongst living sonneteers, and that the care and polish which he has bestowed upon his works give promise of a higher future excellence in this department. I refer to the sonnets entitled respectively "Egypt" and "Accomplices," as admirable specimens of Mr. Aldrich's powers. According to the strict rules laid down by the Italian writers, these sonnets are not constructed on the *legitimate* model, but they approach it so nearly in form, and are so far elevated above mere forms by the genius which embodies them, as to disarm extreme criticism, and content us with their own beauties. A further study and cultivation of the "Sonnet's scanty plot" will add not only to Mr. Aldrich's growing reputation, but to the literary wealth of America in a branch of refined poetical art in which she grievously needs representation.

The following to "T. B." — Bayard Taylor, I presume — is one of the best of the few sonnets which Richard Henry Stoddard, the American Keats, has as yet written: —

"TO T. B.

"Though Youth is fresh upon us, we are squires
Of Poesy, and swell her shining train,
With all the belted knights, whose prowess fires
Our hearts to do what noble deeds remain;
The golden spurs are ours ere many days,
If we are true; then let us join our hands,

And knit our souls in friendship's holy bands,
To help each other in the coming frays.
Envy and hate are for the low and mean;
We will be noble rivals, oftentime
Crossing our spears in tournaments of rhyme,
In friendly tilts to glorify our queen;
Friendly to all save caitiffs foul and wrong,
But stern to guard the holy land of song!"

I cannot but regret, more than in the case of any other American poet, that Stoddard has not cultivated the Sonnet to its utmost limits. There is that in his delicate touch, his rich yet subdued coloring, the conscientious labor which he bestows upon his details, and the general faithfulness and harmony of the entire handling of his subjects, which would have gained for him a foremost place among the sonnet-writers not only of our own country and of our own time, but among those of any country and of any time. Every one of his exquisite lyrics, every line of melodious blank-verse, establishes the justness of the regret, and awakens the hope that hereafter he may bend graceful genius into a form of poetry for which all his powers are so eminently fitted.

Amongst the poets of the South, Paul H. Hayne occupies a pre-eminent place, not only as a sonneteer, but as a writer of narrative and lyrical poetry. In the year 1860 Messrs. Ticknor and Fields, of Boston, published a volume of poems by Mr. Hayne, entitled "Avolio, a Legend of the Island of Cos, with Poems Lyrical, Miscellaneous, and Dramatic," which contains about sixty specimens of his sonnets. They treat of the whole range of subjects to which the Sonnet can be properly applied. In the selection of his subjects Mr. Hayne exhibits the rare taste and judgment of the true sonneteer; since there are

certain subjects, and certain subjects only, that naturally fall within the limits of this form of poetry. Mr. Hayne has studied faithfully the structure and capabilities of the Sonnet; and the result, as shown in his writings, has been, that, although he has not chosen to adhere strictly to the Italian rules of composition, he has nowhere permitted the spirit of his great models to escape him. His sonnets are genuine sonnets in everything, except in the mere arbitrary disposition of the rhymes and the grammatical pauses. Considering the poverty of our language in rhymes, when compared with the Italian, an English sonneteer should perhaps not be held culpable in seeking to escape from their hard trammels at a sacrifice of form. Many examples may be shown where even the greatest of English poets have been obliged to wring their language until it winced, in order to preserve the due succession of rhymes so readily obtained by their Italian teachers. If this be a defect in Mr. Hayne's sonnets, it is greatly overbalanced by the display of all the other merits which he found in his prototypes. Simple, passionate, direct, neither overloaded with ornament nor without its graces, each one of his little poems stands before us as a complete work in itself, owing nothing to an epigrammatic turn of surprise, nor to the too ponderous weight of the last line. His political sonnets are filled with patriotic fire and martial vigor; his philosophical sonnets are imbued with serene thoughtfulness and a far-reaching insight into the secrets of humanity; his personal sonnets are touching with the tender self-denial of pure friendship, or vivid with the burning flame of a righteous scorn; and his love sonnets are passionate with the instincts of youth, colored with the glow of

early imagination, and subdued by the delicate modesty of a chastened yet evident desire.

I call the reader's attention to these sonnets, with the assurance that he will find them amongst the best that have been written in America, and that a perusal of them will send him to Mr. Hayne's volume in eager search for more poetry of the same high quality.

In a volume of charming poetry, by Henry Timrod, which appeared about a year since from a Boston house, there are fourteen sonnets, which, for richness and grace of imagination, beauty of thought, and a warm, natural glow of sentiment and of passion, are not surpassed, I think, by the most perfect sonnets in this collection. Mr. Timrod has been long distinguished for his rare poetic gifts, and all the sonnets I have mentioned are nothing more than fair illustrations of them. Here is one of his sonnets on "Love," remarkable for subtle suggestiveness and harmonious diction: —

> "Most men know love but as a part of life:
> They hide it in some corner of the breast,
> Even from themselves; and only when they rest, -
> In the brief pauses of that daily strife
> Wherewith the world might else be not so rife, —
> They draw it forth (as one draws forth a toy
> To soothe some ardent, kiss-exacting boy),
> And hold it up to sister, child, or wife.
> Ah me! why may not love and life be one!
> Why walk we thus alone, when by our side
> LOVE, like a visible God, might be our guide?
> *How would the marts grow noble, and the street,*
> *Worn now like dungeon-floors by weary feet,*
> *Seem like a golden court-way of the sun!*"

I have at length reached a delicate and difficult part of my subject, — for my next duty is to speak of the

Female Sonnet-writers of America. Some critics, when called upon to discuss the works of lady-authors, invariably assume a tone of half-bantering deference, or an air of sarcastic patronage, which any sensible woman must, and ought to resent. For my part, I have determined to show the respect I entertain for the fair sex, by alluding to their productions with gravity and candor. Acting upon this principle, I am constrained to observe at the outset, that the *Sonnet* has not been especially "glorified" by our countrywomen, many of whom exhibit but a feeble idea of the fine artistic uses to which it may be put. Nevertheless, sonnets of decided merit will be found in this section of my work.

Those of Mrs. E. Oakes Smith and Mrs. Kemble* come first in the order of selection, because among the published poems of these ladies the Sonnet occupies a position of unusual prominence. In reading them, one is struck by their general similarity of feeling. They seem to be the offspring of disappointed, if not gloomy spirits. Betrayed affection, aspirations overthrown, the nothingness of human deeds, and the vanity of human desires, — such are the favorite themes of these two sonneteers.

If the true purpose of poetry were to enervate and depress, instead of exalting the soul, I should commend such strains in terms of no measured praise. As it is, I think them false to nature, and false to art. Let me not, however, be unjust. Whenever these writers permit themselves to rise into more healthful regions of thought,

* Although an Englishwoman by blood and birth, so much of Mrs. Kemble's life has been spent in the United States — she has identified herself so thoroughly with our people — that it seems to me we have a right to claim her as a countrywoman by adoption. Hence her introduction in this place.

— whenever they cease to cry aloud "*vanitas vanitatum*," and to amplify the mournful proverb thus,—

> "O weary, weary world, how full thou art
> Of sin, of sorrow, and all mournful things,"—

we listen to their singing with pleasure, for both are possessed of fancy, culture, command of words and imagery, and of good musical perception.

The sonnet, for example, by Mrs. Oakes Smith, called "The Wife," is touching and graphic; and that on "Wayfarers" embodies a truth as old as the world, in language very natural and expressive.

Noticeable as a collection of happy conceits is Mrs. Kemble's sonnet commencing,

> "What is my lady like? thou fain wouldst know,"

and ending,

> "She 's like a pleasant path without an end;
> Like a strange secret, and a sweet surprise;
> Like a sharp axe of doom, whetted with blush-roses,
> A casket full of gems, whose key one loses."

Still better is her sonnet on

"ECHO.

> "Thou restless voice! that, wandering up and down
> These forest-paths, where for this many a day
> I come to dream the summer hours away,
> Mak'st answer to my voice with mocking tone,—
> *Echo!* thou air-born child of harmony,
> How oft in sunny field, or shadowy wood,
> By lone hillside, or cavern-cradled flood,
> Have I held laughing converse, nymph, with thee!
> This is thy dwelling, and along the wide
> Oak-woven halls, that stretch on every side,
> Murmuring sweet lullabies, I hear thee stray,
> Hushing the dim-eyed Twilight, who all day,
> From searching sunbeams hid in these cool bowers,
> Sleeps on a bed of pale, night-blowing flowers!"

The sonnets of Miss Anne C. Lynch are written in a better and wiser strain than the foregoing. They are grave, but not sombre, and the spirit of a pure, gentle philosophy breathes through them all. Take the following as a specimen of this lady's style: —

"Go forth in life, O friend, not seeking love! —
A mendicant that with imploring eye
And outstretched hand asks of the passer-by
The alms his strong necessities may move.
For *such* poor love, to pity near allied,
Thy generous spirit may not stoop and wait, —
A suppliant whose prayer may be denied,
Like a spurned beggar's at a palace gate; —
But thy heart's affluence lavish, uncontrolled;
The largess of thy love give full and free,
As monarchs in their progress scatter gold;
And be thy heart like the exhaustless sea,
That *must* its wealth of cloud and dew bestow,
Though tributary streams or ebb or flow!"

The sonnet commencing,

"The honey-bee that wanders all day long,"

is a beautiful piece of philosophy, beautifully expressed.

To Mrs. Sarah Josepha Hale the credit is due of having bestowed more than ordinary pains upon the construction of her sonnets, all of which are *legitimate*. They treat of the domestic affections, and of the sphere and influence of *Woman*. The titles she has given them — such as "The Daughter," "The Sister," "The Wife," "The Mother" — indicate clearly enough their scope and purpose.

Of the higher (perhaps I ought to say, the essential) elements of poetry — invention, imagination, passion — Mrs. Hale's sonnets are destitute; but their feminine ten-

derness, and the universal value of the sentiments they inculcate, must always invest them with a certain interest and value. No one can doubt their earnestness, and they furnish a gentle voice to feelings that are common to our race, and are in themselves everlasting.

Mrs. Mary Noel McDonald, of New York, is one of the most copious of our sonneteers. A quick eye for the picturesque, and a capacity to grasp and describe correctly the obvious aspects of nature, have rendered her sonnets locally popular. Beyond these excellences, they have no poetical, and but little artistic, value. Their phraseology is of the conventional type, reminding me of "the peculiar poetic diction" of Hayley and the Della-Cruscan school. She describes the butterflies of June as "flying like winged jewels 'neath the skies"; and the summer rills are to her fancy "like chains of liquid diamonds." Gaudy, artificial similes occur so frequently in her verses as greatly to mar whatever merits they may be deemed to possess.

The remaining sonnets in our collection, by various female authors, exhibit so little individuality of thought or structure, that to characterize them particularly would be a tedious and useless task. Three of these sonnets, however, the productions respectively of Mrs. Emma C. Embury, Mrs. Elizabeth F. Ellett, and Mrs. Anna Maria Lowell, strike me as being worthy of mention.

The first, by Mrs. Embury, beginning,

"He who has travelled through some weary day," &c.,

is truthful and pathetic; and agreeable fancy and musical flow of verse distinguish the second, by Mrs. Ellett,—

"O weary heart! there is a rest for thee";

and the third, by Mrs. Lowell, I quote for its sincerity of tone, its womanly insight, and polished rhythmical ease.

"These rugged wintry days I scarce could bear,
Did I not know that in the early spring,
When wild March winds upon their errands sing,
Thou wouldst return, bursting on this still air,
Like those same winds, when, startled from their lair,
They hunt up violets, and free swift brooks
From icy caves, even as thy sweet looks
Bid my heart bloom, and sing, and break all care:
When drops with welcome rain the April day,
My flowers shall find their April in thine eyes,
Save there the rain in dreamy clouds doth stay,
As loath to fall out of those happy skies;—
Yet sure, my love, thou art most like to May,
That comes with steady sun when April dies!"

I must here bring this essay to a close. It is necessarily imperfect. The difficulty of obtaining material, and the still greater difficulty of properly digesting and arranging it, have caused me much care and trouble. Then, the general character of the sonnets themselves, so few of which possess the vigor and originality which offer salient points for criticism, has embarrassed me throughout.

I trust, therefore, that my readers will make the due allowances. Had I exercised a severe critical judgment, the American portion of the volume would have been greatly reduced; but in that case, many hundred lines of really respectable verse would have been excluded, leaving hardly a sufficient number of sonnets to justify their publication in connection with a work like that by Mr. Hunt.

S. A. L.

ENGLISH SONNETS.

ENGLISH SONNETS.

SIR THOMAS WYATT.

BRUNET AND PHYLLIS.

IF waker care, — if sudden pale color, —
If many sighs with little speech to plain, —
Now joy, now woe, if they my cheer distain, —
For hope of small, if much to fear therefore, —
To haste or slack my pace to less or more, —
Be sign of love, then do I love again.
If thou ask whom, — sure, since I did refrain
Brunet, that set my wealth in such a roar,
The unfeignéd cheer of Phyllis hath the place
That Brunet had; — she hath, and ever shall.
She from myself now hath me in her grace;
She hath in hand my wit, my will, and all.
My heart alone well worthy she doth stay,
Without whose help scant do I live a day.

See Essay, p. 67. The first part of this sonnet is supposed to have been suggested to Wyatt by the sonnet of Petrarca beginning,

"S' una fede amorosa, un cor non finto," —

of which he had elsewhere given an entire version. If so, the latter part may be equally supposed to have been suggested by some French song. I think I have a recollection of some such contrastment of a Phyllis and a Brunette in old French poetry. Yet these propositions and contrapositions are so common in love-poets, that the feeling may have originated with Sir Thomas himself; though he was a Petrarcist professed. In a court like that of Henry VIII. Wyatt may well enough have met with a Brunette of his own, who revolted him with her ostentation and her love of wealth, — setting his mercer's and jeweller's bills "in a roar."

The names of Brunet (Brunetta) and Phyllis in conjunction are to be found nowhere else, I believe, in English literature, except in Steele's amusing story of the two rival beauties in the Spectator, No. 80. Did he get them from Wyatt? It is pleasant to think so, and not at all unlikely. Wyatt was just the sort of man to be loved and admired by Steele.

HENRY HOWARD, EARL OF SURREY.

I.

DESCRIPTION OF SPRING AND SUMMER;

Wherein everything renews, save only the Lover.

THE soote* season that bud and bloom forth brings
With green hath clad the hill, and eke the vale;
The nightingale, with feathers new, she sings;
The turtle to her make† hath told her tale;
Summer is come, for every spray now springs;
The hart hath hung his old head on the pale;
The buck in brake his winter coat he flings;
The fishes flete‡ with new repaired scale;
The adder all her slough away she slings;§
The swift swallow pursueth the flies smale;‖
The busy bee her honey now she mings;¶
Winter is worn, that was the flowers' bale;
And thus I see, among these pleasant things,
Each care decays, and yet my sorrow springs.

* sweet.
† mate.
‡ flit, float quickly.
§ throws off, slips off.
‖ The old pronunciation of *small*.
¶ mingles.

II.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE TIME HE SPENT IN WINDSOR CASTLE.

WHEN Windsor walls sustained my wearied arm,
My hand my chin, to ease my restless head,
The pleasant plot, revested green with warm,*
The blossomed boughs with lusty Ver† y-spread,
The flowered meads, the wedded birds so late,
Mine eyes discover; and to my mind resort
The jolly woes, the hateless short debate,
The rakehell ‡ life, that 'longs to love's disport;
Wherewith, alas! the heavy charge of care
Heaped in my breast breaks forth against my will
In smoky sighs that overcast the air:
My vapored eyes such dreary tears distil,
The tender spring which quicken where they fall;
And I half bend, to throw me down withal.§

* warmth. † spring.

‡ More properly, — says a note in Robert Bell's edition of Surrey, — "*rakel*, rash, careless, reckless. Rakehel was used to designate a dissolute profligate fellow." Some commentators, however, might choose to suppose that there was an involuntary, if not a candid, propriety in the word, when speaking of the Court of Henry VIII.

§ Some of the sentences in these verses are ill put together, per-

haps were incorrectly copied from the manuscript; but the picture at the beginning, some of the expressions in the middle, — such as "jolly woes" and "hateless debate," — and the evidence of passionate emotion at the close, render it worth transcribing. In a subsequent poem — not a sonnet — written when Surrey was put into confinement in the same place in consequence of a quarrel, he again mourns the pleasures he once enjoyed there: —

"Where each sweet place returns a taste full sour;
The large green courts, where we were wont to hove (*hover*),
With eyes cast up into the Maidens' tower (*the Maids of Honor*),
And easy sighs, such as folk draw in love."

III.

EPITAPH ON HIS SQUIRE, THOMAS CLERE.

NORFOLK sprung thee, Lambeth holds thee dead;
Clere, of the Count of Cleremont, thou hight;*
Within the womb of Ormond's race thou bred,
And saw'st thy cousin crowned in thy sight.†
Shelton for love, Surrey for lord thou chase ‡
(Ay me! whilst life did last, that league was tender);
Tracing whose steps thou sawest Kelsal blaze,
Landrecy burnt, and battered Boulogne render,§
At Montreuil gates, hopeless of all recure,
Thine Earl, half dead, gave in thy hand his will,
Which cause did thee this pining death procure,
Ere summers four times seven thou couldst fulfil.
Ah, Clere! if love had booted, care, or cost,
Heaven had not won, nor earth so timely lost. ‖

* wast called.
† Anne Boleyn.
‡ didst choose.
§ surrender.

‖ This sonnet is complete of its kind. There is not a sentence which does not contain information; not a word too much; no want of increased interest; all is strong, simple, and affecting.

Clere died of a wound received while he was attending his lord, as here mentioned. His family was of Norman origin; and he was the son of Sir Robert C'ere, of Ormsby in Norfolk, by a lady of the Boleyn family.

IV.

ON THE LIFE AND DEATH OF SARDANAPALUS.*

THE Assyrian King, in peace, with foul desire
And filthy lusts that stained his regal heart,
In war, that should set princely hearts on fire,
Did yield, vanquisht for want of martial art.
The dint of swords from kisses seemèd strange,
And harder than his lady's side, his targe;
From glutton's feasts to soldier's fare, a change;
His helmet, far above a garland's charge;
Who scarce the name of manhood did retain,
Drenchèd in sloth and womanish delight,
Feeble of spirit, impatient of pain,
When he had lost his honor and his right,
(Proud, time of wealth; in storms, appalled with dread,)
Murdered himself, to show some manful deed.†

* A bitter covert satire on Henry the Eighth.

† There is a want of a proper nominative case to govern the verb "murdered"; and "proud, time of wealth" is a forced way of saying "proud, *during* a time of wealth"; otherwise this sonnet is excellent. By murdering himself to "show some manful deed," he means to intimate, that the only thing which was left for Henry to do, in order to show himself not inferior to Sardanapalus, was to be bold enough to commit suicide; but, as Henry failed to do this, he is here delivered up to the disgust of posterity, as a thoroughly unmanly scoundrel.

The boldness of the sonnet is wonderful, if we consider the

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

I.

ON HIS HAVING OBTAINED A PRIZE AT A TOURNAMENT.

HAVING this day my horse, my hand, my lance
Guided so well, that I obtained the prize,
Both by the judgment of the English eyes
And of some sent from that sweet enemy, France;
Horsemen my skill in horsemanship advance;
Townfolks, my strength; a daintier judge applies.
His praise to sleight, which from good use doth rise;
Some lucky wits impute it but to chance;
Others, because, of both sides, I do take
My blood from them who did excel in this,
Think nature me a man of arms did make.
How far they shot awry! The true cause is,
Stella looked on; and from her heavenly face
Sent forth the beams which made so fair my race.

times and the two men. Is it not probable that it was the real death-warrant of Surrey? Henry picked an ill-founded quarrel with him on an assumption in his coat of arms; but what was that assumption, had it even been illegal, compared with this terrible invective? One imagines Henry, with wrath-white lips, putting the copy of it into his pocket, and saying internally, "I 'll murder *you*, at all events." — *And he did.*

II.

DEATH AN ORDINANCE OF NATURE, AND THEREFORE GOOD.*

SINCE Nature's works be good, and death doth serve
As Nature's work, why should we fear to die?
Since fear is vain but when it may preserve,
Why should we fear that which we cannot fly?
Fear is more pain than is the pain it fears,
Disarming human minds of native might,
While each conceit an ugly figure bears,
Which were not evil, viewed in reason's light.
Our owly eyes, which dimmed with passions be,
And scarce discern the dawn of coming day,
Let them be cleared, and now begin to see
Our life is but a step in dusty way.
Then let us hold the bliss of peaceful mind;
Since this we feel, great loss we cannot find.

* Sung by Musidorus to Pyrocles in Sir Philip Sidney's "Arcadia," when the two friends are in danger of being put to death undeservedly. The argument with which the sonnet sets out is a favorite with divine Marcus Antoninus in his "Meditations," and is, in truth, as logical as it is noble. And the argument respecting fear is of a like soundness. Fear is intended by nature to warn us from passes that we can avoid; what then has it to do with such as are unavoidable? We may feel them painfully, but we must not ap-

prehend them ignobly. We must not suppose, that in any of the ordinary courses of her operations Nature intends us evil.

I do not insert this sonnet for anything otherwise very good in it, but that we may feel ourselves a little longer in the company of the high mind from which it emanated. It is preceded in the Arcadia by a noble passage respecting the nature and condition of the soul after death; and for the reason just mentioned, and because it introduces the Sonnet itself, and the Arcadia is not often met with, we think the reader will not be sorry to have it here repeated.

"'Take the pre-eminence in all things but in true loving,' answered Musidorus; 'for the confession of that no death shall get of me.'

"'Of that,' answered Pyrocles, soberly smiling, 'I perceive we shall have a debate in the other world; if at least there remain anything of remembrance in that place.'

"'I do not think the contrary,' said Musidorus; 'although you know it is greatly held, that with the death of body and senses, — which are not only the beginning, but dwelling and nourishing of passions, thoughts, and imaginations, — they failing, memory likewise fails, which riseth only out of them: and then is there left nothing but the intellectual part or intelligence, which, void of all moral virtues, — which stand in the mean of perturbations, — doth only live in the contemplative virtue and power of the omnipotent good, the soul of souls, and universal life of this great work; and therefore is utterly void from the possibility of drawing to itself these sensible considerations.'

"'Certainly,' answered Pyrocles, 'I easily yield that we shall not know one another, and much less these past things, with a sensible or passionate knowledge; for, the cause being taken away, the effects follow. Neither do I think we shall have such a memory as we now have, which is but a relic of the senses, or rather a print the senses have left of things past in our thoughts; but it shall be a vital power of that very intelligence; which, as while it was here it held the chief seat of our life, and was, as it were, the last resort to which, of all our knowledges, the highest appeal came; and so, by that means, was never ignorant of our actions, though many times rebelliously resisted, — always, with this prison, dark-

ened: so much more being free of that prison, and returning to the life of all things, where all infinite knowledge is, it cannot but be a right intelligence — which is both his name and being — of things both present and past, though void of imagining to itself anything, but even grown like to his Creator, hath all things, with a spiritual knowledge, before it. The difference of which is as hard for us to conceive, as it was for us when we were in our mothers' wombs, to comprehend — if anybody would have told us — what kind of light we now in this life see, what kind of knowledge we now have. Yet now we do not only feel our present being, but we conceive what we were before we were born, though remembrance make us not do it, but knowledge, and though we are utterly without any remorse * of any misery we might then suffer. Even such and much more odds † shall there be at that second delivery of ours; when, void of sensible memory, or memorative passion, we shall not see the colors,‡ but lives, of all things that have been or can be; and shall, as I hope, know our friendship, though exempt from the earthly cares of friendship, having both united it and ourselves in that high and heavenly love of the unquenchable light.'

"As he had ended his speech, Musidorus, looking with a heavenly joy upon him, sang this song unto him he had made, before love turned his muse to another subject." — *The Arcadia, now the fifth time published.* Dublin, 1621, fol.

* Reperception. † Advantage.

‡ Appearances, as distinguished from essences.

III.

SONNET TO THE MOON.

WITH how sad steps, O Moon! thou climb'st the skies,
How silently, and with how wan a face!
What! may it be, that even in heavenly place
That busy Archer his sharp arrows tries?
Sure, if that long with love acquainted eyes
Can judge of love, thou feel'st a lover's case;
I read it in thy looks, thy languished grace
To me that feel the like thy state descries.
Then, even of fellowship, O Moon! tell me,
Is constant love deemed there but want of wit?
Are beauties there as proud as here they be?
Do they above love to be loved, and yet
Those lovers scorn whom that love doth possess?
Do they call virtue there ungratefulness?

IV.

SONNET TO SLEEP.

COME Sleep, O Sleep, the certain knot of peace,
The baiting place of wit, the balm of woe,
The poor man's wealth, the prisoner's release,
The indifferent judge between the high and low.
With shield of proof shield me from out the prease *
Of those fierce darts Despair at me doth throw;
O make in me those civil wars to cease:
I will good tribute pay, if thou do so.
Take thou of me smooth pillows, sweetest bed,
A chamber deaf to noise and blind to light,
A rosy garland, and a weary head;
And if these things, as being thine by right,
Move not thy heavy grace, thou shalt in me
Livelier than elsewhere STELLA's image see.

* press, throng.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH.

ON SPENSER'S "FAERY QUEEN."*

METHOUGHT I saw the grave where Laura lay,
Within that temple where the vestal flame
Was wont to burn; and passing by that way,
To see that buried dust of living fame
Whose tomb fair Love and fairer Virtue kept,
All suddenly I saw the *Faery Queen:*
At whose approach the soul of Petrarke wept,
And from thenceforth those Graces were not seen
(For they this Queen attended); in whose stead
Oblivion laid him down on Laura's hearse.
Hereat the hardest stones were seen to bleed,
And groans of buried ghosts the heavens did perse;
Where Homer's spright did tremble all for grief,
And curst the access of that celestial thief.†

* Headed by the author, "A Vision upon *this conceipt* of the Faery Queen"; for it was published among the prefatory verses.

† Two persons, I have no doubt, were included in the magnificent flattery of this sonnet, — Queen Elizabeth as well as Spenser; for she it was whom the poet expressly imaged in his Queen of Fairyland; and Sir Walter was not the man to let the occasion pass for extolling the great woman, their joint mistress. The Italics in the sonnet are copied from Todd's edition of Spenser, and I

have no doubt appeared in the original edition, and are the writer's own.

Raleigh's *abolition* of Laura, Petrarca, and Homer, all in a lump, in honor of his friend Spenser, is in the highest style of his wilful and somewhat domineering genius; but everything in the process is as grandly as it is summarily done; and welcome indeed from *such* a "courtier of the Queen" must have been this testimony to the great but no less courtly poet, — "that celestial thief."

EDMUND SPENSER.*

I.

TO HIS SONNETS, ON SENDING THEM TO HIS MISTRESS.

HAPPY, ye leaves! when as those lily hands
Which hold my life in their dead-doing might
Shall handle you, and hold in love's soft bands,
Like captives trembling at the victor's sight;
And happy lines! on which, with starry light,
Those lamping eyes will deign sometimes to look,
And read the sorrows of my dying spright
Written with tears in heart's close-bleeding book;
And happy rhymes! bathed in the sacred brook
Of Helicon, whence she derivéd is;—
When ye behold that angel's blessed look,
My soul's long-lackéd food, my heaven's bliss,
Leaves, lines, and rhymes, seek her to please alone,
Whom if ye please, I care for other none.†

* For other sonnets of this great poet see the Introductory Essay, pp. 71–74.

† A sonnet like this is worth extracting, were it only for the sake of the beautiful and affecting line—

"Written with tears in heart's close-bleeding book";—

an idea imitated in a like spirit by one of our old dramatists,—

"Within the red-leaved tablets of the heart."

II.

TO ONE WHO OBJECTED TO PRIDE IN HIS MISTRESS.

RUDELY thou wrongest my dear heart's desire,
In finding fault with her too portly pride.
The thing which I do most in her admire
Is of the world unworthy most envìde:
For in those lofty looks is close implied
Scorn of base things, and 'sdain of foul dishonor;
Threatening rash eyes which gaze on her so wide,
That loosely they ne dare to look upon her.
Such pride is praise; such portliness is honor,
That boldened innocence bears in her eyes;
And her fair countenance, like a goodly banner,
Spreads in defiance of all enemiẹs.
Was never in this world aught worthy tried,
Without some spark of such self-pleasing pride.*

* This sonnet, saving the repeated *i*'s in the rhymes, is good; but I must beg leave not to like the woman. Why should she be always defying what nobody, most likely, intended? Something however is to be said for her, if she was the same person — as she is believed to have been — whom the poet describes as being of humble origin, and whom he subsequently married.

III.

SPRING SENT TO HIS MISTRESS LIKE A HERALD.*

FRESH Spring, the herald of love's mighty king,
In whose coat-armor richly are displayed
All sorts of flowers the which on earth do spring,
In goodly colors gloriously arrayed,
Go to my Love, where she is careless laid
Yet in her winter's bower, not well awake:
Tell her the joyous time will not be stayed,
Unless she do him by the forelock take;
Bid her therefore herself soon ready make,
To wait on Love amongst his lovely crew;
Where every one that misseth then her make,
Shall be by him amerced with penance due.
Make haste therefore, sweet love, whilst it is prime;
For none can call again the passed time.

* I insert this sonnet on account of the picture at the beginning, which is agreeably in the taste of the age. The sonnet looks like a "Valentine." In the word "make"—*mate*—in the eleventh line, which rhymes with the same word in another sense, Spenser avails himself, as he frequently does, of a privilege common to poetry in many other countries, Italy included.

IV.

ABSENCE LAMENTED, DOVE-LIKE.

LIKE as the culver on the baréd bough
Sits mourning for the absence of her mate;
And in her songs sends many a wishful vow
For his return that seems to linger late:
So I alone, now left disconsolate,
Mourn to myself the absence of my Love;
And, wandering here and there all desolate,
Seek with my plaints to match that mournful dove:
Ne joy of aught that under heaven doth hove*
Can comfort me, but her own joyous sight;
Whose sweet aspect both God and man can move
In her unspotted pleasance to delight.
Dark is my day, whiles her fair light I miss;
And dead my life, that wants such lively bliss.

* hover, exist.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

I.

THE POET LAMENTS TO A FRIEND HIS PROFESSION AS AN ACTOR.

O, FOR my sake do you with Fortune chide,
The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
That did not better for my life provide
Than public means, which public manners breeds.
Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
And almost thence my nature is subdued
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand.
Pity me then, and wish I were renewed;
Whilst, like a willing patient, I will drink
Potions of eysell 'gainst my strong infection:
No bitterness that I will bitter think,
Nor double penance, to correct correction.
Pity me then, dear friend, and I assure ye,
Even that your pity is enough to cure me.*

* This sonnet, though it has one admirable passage, — about the dyer's hand, — is not selected on account of its superiority to the general run of the author's compositions of this kind, but because Shakespeare is here "unlocking his heart," and because all his sonnets appear to have been written after he had entered upon a line

of life for which he and others had not yet procured its just social consideration.

"Public means, which public manners breeds"

is very harsh versifying, — to say nothing of the bad grammar, which was a license of the time. And the concluding rhyme "assure ye" and "cure me," is no rhyme. The nature

"subdued
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand"

is true Shakespearian writing.

I have noticed the faulty passages, because cultivators of the Sonnet must not be misled, even by Shakespeare. He can afford to err, where it would be presumption to follow him.

"Eysell" is vinegar. Etymologists — in whose way so small a thing as a consonant is never allowed to stand — derive the word from the German *Essig*, — vinegar.

II.

THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF BEING LOVED BY A NOBLE NATURE A TRIUMPH OVER ALL TROUBLES.

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,
Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least,
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising, —
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings,
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.*

* By the "outcast state" to which he alludes in this sonnet, Shakespeare is supposed to mean the cause of trouble lamented in the one preceding. The modesty evinced in the wishes for the features and faculties of other persons has, in such a man especially, been deservedly admired; and the pause and the change of tone, full of triumphant emotion, at the words, "Haply I think on thee," produce the utmost effect of masterliness in art from the perfection of the feeling. If the sonnet were set to music, the passage would suggest to a worthy composer a fine change in the key.

The gladdening influences of a lover's thoughts, the cheering light of a pure affection, were never depicted with truer feeling than in this sonnet.

III.

TO HIS LADY UPON HER PLAYING ON THE VIRGINALS.

How oft when thou, my music, music play'st
Upon that blessèd wood, whose motion sounds
With thy sweet fingers, when thou gently sway'st
The wiry concord that my ear confounds,
Do I envy those jacks, that nimble leap
To kiss the tender inward of thy hand,
Whilst my poor lips, which should that harvest reap,
At the wood's boldness by thee blushing stand!
To be so tickled they would change their state
And situation with those dancing chips,
O'er whom thy fingers walk with gentle gait,
Making dead wood more blest than living lips:
Since saucy jacks so happy are in this,
Give them thy fingers, me thy lips to kiss.*

* This is not one of Shakespeare's best sonnets; but, as he is found interesting under any circumstances that present him to the imagination, I thought the reader might like to see him in a lady's company while she was playing on the musical instrument that was the prototype of the wooden piano-forte. To find him thus situated seems like the next thing to having him with us to *tea*, or criticising the last new sonata.

The term "jack," since confined to that hidden portion of the key which strikes upon the wires or strings of this kind of instrument, appears in Shakespeare's time to have been applied to the whole of

it. "Saucy jack," here pleasantly turned into a pun upon the keys, was a common term for a presumptuous fellow.

Had an Italian poet translated this sonnet, the language of his musical country would have supplied him with a term for the keys much more appropriate than either, — *tasti* or *tasterelle*, — "little tasters." Such is the sensitive Italian tongue. But how good is

"The tender inward of thy hand"!

and how well Shakespeare has described a "slow movement" in the line

"O'er whom thy fingers walk with gentle gait"!

IV.

WHAT SINGING BIRDS AND FLOWERS ARE IN THE ABSENCE OF THE BELOVED PERSON.

From you have I been absent in the spring,
When proud-pied April, dress'd in all his trim,
Hath put a spirit of youth in everything,
That * heavy Saturn laughed and leaped with him.
Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
Of different flowers in odor and in hue
Could make me any summer's story tell,
Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew;
Nor did I wonder at the lilies white,
Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose:
They were, though sweet, but figures of delight,
Drawn after you; you, pattern of all those.
Yet seemed it winter still; and, you away,
As with your shadow I with these did play.

* A poetical license for *so* that.

V.

TRUE LOVE NOT AT THE MERCY OF TIME AND CIRCUMSTANCE.

LET me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O no; it is an ever fixéd mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken:
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth 's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love 's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even unto the edge of doom.
If this be error, and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.*

* It would be difficult to cite a finer passage of moral poetry than this description of the master passion. How true and how ennobling to our nature! We at once recognize in it the abstraction of that conception which has found a dwelling and a name in the familiar forms of Desdemona, Juliet, Imogen, Cordelia, of Romeo, and of Othello, too, if that character be correctly understood. If this sonnet was written before his dramas, then it was the pregnant thought from which were destined to spring those in-

imitable creations of female character that have been loved, as if they were living beings, by thousands.

"Admit impediments" is very prosaic. It would not at all do to *sing*. Yet in a poet like Shakespeare, who had words and will, and who if he had chosen to do so, could have begun his sonnet in a strain the most musical, the phrase, in reading, acquires a sort of deliberate commencing dignity. We know how much poetry will follow. Nor do the grand peremptory words disappoint us.

VI.

HE LAMENTS THAT THE COUNTENANCE OF SOME GREAT AND WORTHY PATRON SEEMS TO BE DIVERTED FROM HIM.

FULL many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green;
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy,
Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
With ugly rack on his celestial face,
And from the forlorn world his visage hide,
Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace.
Even so my sun one early morn did shine
With all triumphant splendor on my brow;
But, out, alack! he was but one hour mine;
The region cloud * hath masked him from me now.
Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth;
Suns of the world may stain, when heaven's sun staineth.

* By "region cloud" is meant the cloud over the whole landscape, — the cloud occupying the whole region of the air.

We are not sure that we have not extracted this sonnet solely on account of the magnificent second line. Still, the rest is not unworthy of it.

VII.

AFFECTION MOST LOVING WHEN IT MOST FEARS TO LOSE.

THAT time of year thou mayst in me behold,
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave erelong.*

* We quote this sonnet partly for the fine amplification it contains of a well-known phrase in Macbeth, and chiefly for the surpassing beauty of the images illustrative of a poet's silent old age. We challenge the poetry of England and America against the fourth line, —

"Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang."

VIII.

TRUE SELF-SACRIFICE OF LOVE.

No longer mourn for me when I am dead
Than you shall hear the surly, sullen bell
Give notice to the world that I am fled
From this vile world with vilest worms to dwell:
Nay, if you read this line, remember not
The hand that writ it; for I love you so,
That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,
If thinking on me then should make you woe.
Oh! if, I say, you look upon this verse,
When I perhaps compounded am with clay,
Do not so much as my poor name rehearse,
But let your love even with my life decay;
Lest the wise world should look into your moan,
And mock you with me after I am gone.*

* This divine sonnet has been noticed in the Introductory Essay, p. 77.

BEN JONSON.

TO THE KING'S HOUSEHOLD ON THEIR WITHHOLDING HIS ALLOWANCE OF SACK.*

WHAT can the cause be, when the King hath given
His poet sack, the Household will not pay?
Are they so scanted in their store? or driven,
For want of knowing the poet, to say him nay?
Well, they should know him, would the King but grant
His poet leave to sing his Household true:
He 'd frame such ditties of their store and want,
Would make the very Greencloth to look blue,
And rather wish, in their expense of sack,
So the allowance from the King to use,
As the old bard should no canary lack:
'T were better spare a butt, than spill his muse;
For in the genius of a poet's verse
The King's fame lives. Go now, deny his tierce.†

* To which he was entitled as Poet Laureate.

† The tierce was not denied, but it is said to have been further withheld, till Ben wrote a more civil request. The misgovernment of all the Stuarts often caused their exchequers to run dry; and perhaps the poet offended higher persons than he suspected, by this amusing but confident remonstrance. One can imagine the momentary perplexity and confusion of the King — Charles the First — if the verses were shown him, between his regard for his Laureate's praises, and annoyance at his irritability.

WILLIAM DRUMMOND, OF HAWTHORNDEN.

I.

YOUTH UNEXPECTEDLY SMITTEN BY LOVE.

As the young fawn, when winter 's gone away
(Unto a sweeter season granting place),
More wanton grown by smiles of heaven's fair face,
Leaveth the silent woods at break of day,
And now on hills and now by brooks doth prey
On tender flowers, secure and solitar,*
Far from all cabins, and where shepherds are;
Where his desire him guides, his foot doth stray;
He feareth not the dart, nor other arms,
Till he be shot into the noblest part
By cunning archer who in dark bush lies:
So innocent, not fearing coming harms,
Wandering was I that day when your fair eyes,
World-killing shafts, gave death-wounds to my heart.†

* Solitary, — a Scotticism, from the French *solitaire;* that is to say, from the ordinary pronunciation of that word; — *solitary* itself having come from the older poetical pronunciation *solitaire*.

† This appears to have been one of the earliest productions of Drummond. It is translated from a sonnet of Bembo, which is printed with it in the edition of Drummond's poems published by the Maitland Club (Edinburgh, 1832); and it is there accompanied by two variations of itself, which look like poetical studies. One is in couplets, which he calls "freer sort of rhyme," — or in his older

northern spelling, "frier sort of rime." The other is "paraphrasticalie translated." The study seems to lie chiefly in the versification; and he is so bent on giving variety to the experiments, that the stricken deer is a "fawn" in the first effusion, a "stag" in the second, and a "hart" in the third. It thus appears that Drummond did not get his reputation as a versifier for nothing. The sonnet is very pleasing and graceful.

II.

SENSE OF THE FRAGILITY OF ALL THINGS AND OF THE UNSEASONABLENESS OF PASSION IN LOVE, NO PREVENTIVE OF LOVE OR POETRY.

I KNOW that all beneath the moon decays,
And what by mortals in this world is brought
In time's great periods shall return to naught;
That fairest states have fatal nights and days.
I know how all the Muse's heavenly lays,
With toil of sprite which are so dearly bought,
As idle sounds, of few or none are sought;
And that naught lighter is than airy praise.
I know frail beauty like the purple flower
To which one morn oft birth and death affords
That love a jarring is of minds' accords,
Where sense and will invassall reason's power.
Know what I list, this all cannot me move,
But that, O me! I both must write and love.

III.

HE MOURNS THE LOSS OF HIS MISTRESS.*

SWEET soul, which in the April of thy years
So to enrich the heaven mad'st poor this round,†
And now, with golden rays of glory crowned,
Most blest abid'st above the sphere of spheres;
If heavenly laws, alas! have not thee bound
From looking to this globe that all up-bears,
If ruth and pity there above be found,
O deign to lend a look unto these tears.
Do not disdain, dear ghost, this sacrifice;
And though I raise not pillars to thy praise,
My offerings take. Let this for me suffice:
My heart, a living pyramid, I raise;
And whilst kings' tombs with laurels flourish green,
Thine shall with myrtles and these flowers be seen.

* Taken from him on their wedding-day.
† orb, — the globe.

IV.

RECOLLECTIONS OF HIS LOST BRIDE.

ALEXIS,* here she stayed; among these pines,
Sweet hermitress, she did alone repair;
Here did she spread the treasure of her hair,
More rich than that brought from the Colchian mines;
She set her by these muskéd eglantines,—
The happy place the print seems yet to bear;—
Her voice did sweeten here thy sugared lines,
To which winds, trees, beasts, birds, did lend an ear;
Me here she first perceived, and here a morn
Of bright carnations did o'erspread her face;
Here did she sigh, here first my hopes were born,
And first I got a pledge of promised grace;
But ah! what served it to be happy so,
Sith† passéd pleasures double but new woe.

* This name appears to have been intended for that of his friend William Alexander, Earl of Sterling.

† since.

V.

TO A BIRD SINGING.

SWEET Bird, that sing'st away the early hours
Of winters past or coming, void of care,
Well pleaséd with delights which present are,
Fair seasons, budding sprays, sweet smelling flowers;
To rocks, to springs, to rills, from leafy bowers
Thou thy Creator's goodness dost declare,
And what dear gifts on thee he did not spare,
A stain to human sense in sin that lowers.
What soul can be só sick which by thy songs
(Attired in sweetness) sweetly is not driven
Quité to forget earth's turmoils, spites, and wrongs,
And lift a reverend eye and thought to heaven!
Sweet artless songster! thou my mind dost raise
To airs of spheres — yes, and to angels' lays.

VI.

THE PRAISE OF A SOLITARY LIFE.

THRICE happy he who by some shady grove,
Far from the clamorous world, doth live his own;
Though solitary, who is not alone,
But doth converse with that eternal love.
O how more sweet is bird's harmonious moan,
Or the hoarse sobbings of the widowed dove,
Than those smooth whisperings near a prince's throne,
Which good make doubtful, do the evil approve!
Or how more sweet is Zephyr's wholesome breath,
And sighs embalmed which new-born flowers unfold,
Than that applause vain honor doth bequeath!
How sweet are streams to poison drunk in gold!
The world is full of horrors, troubles, slights;
Woods' harmless shades have only true delights.

JOHN MILTON.

I.

WHEN THE ASSAULT WAS INTENDED TO THE CITY.*

CAPTAIN, or Cŏlŏnel, or Knight in arms,
Whose chance on these defenceless doors may seize,
If deed of honor did thee ever please,
Guard them, and him within protect from harms:
He can requite thee; for he knows the charms
That call fame on such gentle acts as these,
And he can spread thy name o'er land and seas,
Whatever clime the sun's bright circle warms.
Lift not thy spear against the Muses' bower:
The great Emathian conqueror † bid spare
The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower
Went to the ground; and the repeated air
Of sad Electra's poet had the power
To save the Athenian walls from ruin bare.‡

* In 1642, during the civil wars; when the army of Charles the First had arrived at Brentford, against the poet's friends, the Republicans.

† Alexander; when ninety thousand Thebans were killed, and thirty thousand taken prisoners.

‡ During the conquest of Athens by Lysander, when some verses of Euripides happened to be sung at a banquet given to a council of war.

II.

ON THE DETRACTION WHICH FOLLOWED UPON THE WRITING OF CERTAIN TREATISES.

I DID but prompt the age to quit their clogs
By the known rules of ancient liberty,
When straight a barbarous noise environs me
Of owls and cuckoos, asses, apes, and dogs:
As when those hinds that were transformed to frogs,
Railed at Latona's twin-born progeny,
Which after held the sun and moon in fee.*
But this is got by casting pearl to hogs,
That bawl for freedom in their senseless mood,
And still revolt when truth would set them free.
License they mean, when they cry Liberty;
For who loves that, must first be wise and good;
But from that mark how far they rove we see,
For all this waste of wealth, and loss of blood.

* The story of the peasants in Ovid, who were thus transformed for insulting Latona and her babes, Apollo and Diana.

III.

ON THE LATE MASSACRE IN PIEDMONT.*

AVENGE, O Lord! thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,
Forget not. In thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that rolled
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To heaven. Their martyr's blood and ashes sow
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple Tyrant; that from these may grow
A hundred-fold, who having learnt thy way,
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

* In 1665, by order of the Duke of Savoy. It is delightful to be able to say, in this year 1856, that the slaughter has been "avenged" in a better manner than the stern poet desired; namely, by the erection of a Protestant Chapel in the capital of Piedmont, and under the auspices of a king of the Duke of Savoy's house.

IV.

ON HIS BLINDNESS.

WHEN I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless,* though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he, returning, chide;
"Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?"
I fondly ask. But Patience to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
Either man's work, or his own gifts. Who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

* An allusion to the parable of the talents, Matthew xxv. 14–30. "And he speaks," adds Bishop Newton, "with great modesty of himself, as if he had not five, or two, but only one talent."

V.

ON THE SAME.

To Cyriac Skinner.

Cyriac, this three-years-day these eyes, though clear,
To outward view, of blemish or of spot,
Bereft of light their seeing have forgot;
Nor to their idle orbs doth sight appear
Of sun, or moon, or star, throughout the year
Or man, or woman. Yet I argue not
Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope, but still bear up and steer
Right onward. What supports me dost thou ask?
The conscience, friend, to have lost them, overplied
In Liberty's defence, my noble task,
Of which all Europe rings from side to side.
This thought might lead me through the world's vain mask,
Content, though blind, had I no better guide.

VI.

TO THE NIGHTINGALE.

O NIGHTINGALE, that on yon bloomy spray
Warblest at eve, when all the woods are still;
Thou with fresh hope the lover's heart dost fill,
While the jolly Hours lead on propitious May.
Thy liquid notes that close the eye of day,
First heard before the shallow cuckoo's bill,
Portend success in love; O, if Jove's will
Have linked that amorous power to thy soft lay,
Now timely sing, ere the rude bird of hate
Foretell my hopeless doom, in some grove nigh;
As thou from year to year, hast sung too late
For my relief, yet had'st no reason why:
Whether the Muse or Love call thee his mate,
Both them I serve, and of their train am I.

VII.

INVITATION TO AN ATTIC FEAST.

LAWRENCE,* of virtuous father virtuous son,
Now that the fields are dank, and ways are mire,
Where shall we sometimes meet, and by the fire
Help waste a sullen day, what may be won
From the hard season gaining? Time will run
On smoother, till Favonius re-inspire
The frozen earth, and clothe in fresh attire
The lily and rose, that neither sowed nor spun.
What neat repast shall feast us, light and choice,
Of Attic taste, with wine, whence we may rise
To hear the lute well touched, or artful voice
Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air?
He who of those delights can judge, and spare
To interpose them oft, is not unwise.

* This Mr. Lawrence was the son of the President of Cromwell's Council.

VIII.

A DREAM OF HIS LOST WIFE.

METHOUGHT I saw my late espoused saint
Brought to me, like Alcestis, from the grave;
Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,
Rescued from death by force, though pale and faint.
Mine (as whom, washed from spot of child-bed taint,
Purification in th' old Law did save,
And such as yet once more I trust to have
Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint)
Came vested all in white, pure as her mind:
Her face was veiled, yet to my fancied sight,
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shined
So clear, as in no face with more delight.
But O, as to embrace me she inclined,
I waked, she fled, and day brought back my night! *

* This conclusion has been thought a "conceit," but it is not. The idea is perfectly warranted by the feeling. Returning day, to those who have undergone such calamities, does bring back a veritable night-like gloom to the soul, darker even for the light.

But with no irreverence be it said, that Milton should not have used the word "*taint*" in connection with child-bed. There is no taint where the mind is not tainted; and the word on such an occasion desecrated both mind and heart.

THOMAS GRAY.

ON THE DEATH OF HIS FRIEND WEST.*

In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
And reddening Phœbus lifts his golden fire;
The birds in vain their amorous descant join,
Or cheerful fields resume their green attire:
These ears, alas! for other notes repine;
A different object do these eyes require;
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine;
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire.
Yet morning smiles the busy race to cheer,
And new-born pleasure brings to happier men;
The fields to all their wonted tribute bear;
To warm their little loves the birds complain;
I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear;
And weep the more, because I weep in vain.

* For a defence of this beautiful sonnet against the hypercriticism of Wordsworth, see Introductory Essay, pp. 82, 83.

THOMAS WARTON.

I.

WRITTEN ON A BLANK LEAF OF DUGDALE'S MONASTICON.*

DEEM not devoid of elegance the sage,
By Fancy's genuine feelings unbeguiled,
Of painful pedantry the poring child,
Who turns of these proud domes the historic page,
Now sunk by Time and Henry's fiercer rage.†
Think'st thou the warbling Muses never smiled
On his lone hours? Ingenuous views engage
His thoughts on themes, unclassic falsely styled,
Intent. While cloistered Piety displays
Her mouldering roll, the piercing eye explores
New manners, and the pomp of elder days,
Whence culls the pensive bard his pictured stores.
Nor rough nor barren are the winding ways
Of hoar antiquity, but strewn with flowers.

* This and the next sonnet were favorites with Hazlitt.

† Alluding to the dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry the Eighth.

II.

AFTER SEEING THE COLLECTION OF PICTURES AT WILTON HOUSE.

FROM Pembroke's princely dome, where mimic Art
Decks with a magic hand the dazzling bowers,
Its living hues where the warm pencil pours,
And breathing forms from the rude marble start —
How to life's humbler scene can I depart,
My breast all glowing from these gorgeous towers?
In my low cell how cheat the sullen hours?
Vain the complaint; for Fancy can impart
(To Fate superior, and to Fortune's doom).
Whate'er adorns the stately-storied hall.
She, 'mid the dungeon's solitary gloom,
Can dress the Graces in their Attic pall;
Bid the green landscape's vernal beauty bloom,
And in bright trophies clothe the twilight wall.*

* This sonnet, though containing several commonplace expressions, has been justly admired, both for its language in other respects, and for the truthfulness of its feeling. But the author would have given it an additional grace, if he had written a companion sonnet, informing us what verse it was that set the first lines of it flowing; to wit, his father's, — another Thomas Warton, also — like himself — Professor of Poetry at Oxford, and worthy estimator of a student's modest apartments. The main thought in the

two poems is not the same, but there is a similar impression of contrast and contentment, and the father's exordium in particular was evidently in the mind of the son. The effusion of the elder Warton is so pleasing, and records a feeling with which so many persons can sympathize, that although its power is but on a par with the unambitiousness of the subject, I think the reader will not be sorry to have it repeated.

VERSES WRITTEN AFTER SEEING WINDSOR CASTLE.

"From beauteous Windsor's high and storied halls,
Where Edward's chiefs start from the glowing walls,
To my low cot from ivory beds of state,
Pleased I return unenvious of the great.
So the bee ranges o'er the varied scenes
Of corn, of heaths, of fallows, and of greens,
Pervades the thicket, soars above the hill,
Or murmurs to the meadow's murmuring rill,
Now haunts old hollowed oaks, deserted cells,
Now seeks the low-vale lily's silver bells,
Sips the warm fragrance of the greenhouse bowers,
And tastes the myrtle and the citron's flowers;
At length returning to the wonted comb,
Prefers to all his little straw-built home."

III.

ON REVISITING THE RIVER LODDON.

Ah! what a weary race my feet have run
Since first I trod thy banks with alders crowned,
And thought my way was all through fairy ground,
Beneath thy azure sky and golden sun, —
Where first my muse to lisp her notes begun!
While pensive memory traces back the round
Which fills the varied interval between;
Much pleasure, more of sorrow, marks the scene.
Sweet native stream! those skies and suns so pure
No more return to cheer my evening road!
Yet still one joy remains, that not obscure
Nor useless, all my vacant days have flowed
From youth's gay dawn to manhood's prime mature,
Nor with the Muse's laurel unbestowed.

SAMUEL JACKSON PRATT.*

REVISITING A BIRTHPLACE WHICH WAS NOT HAPPY.

Scenes of my boyish days, — yet scenes of woe
From cradled childhood up to manhood's bloom, —
At thy approach why do my eyes o'erflow,
As if in grief to meet were still our doom?
Yet why, though half involved in shades of night
Dim through the river's mist thy spire appears,
Impatient do I strain my aching sight,
Eager to own each object through my tears?
And as thy well-remembered bridge I gain,
And draw more near, alas! my natal earth,
Though faster fall the drops, though sharp the pain,
I hail my birthplace, though I weep my birth.
Ah, tender tears, which tender thoughts impart,
And leave no room for malice in my heart!

* Author of "Liberal Opinions," "Emma Corbet," and other works, — a writer who, if he had known how to discipline his mind, would have obtained distinction. I found this sonnet in Mr. Lofft's collection. Though the phraseology is here and there artificial, much of it is otherwise, and the impression affecting. It is an instance of what has been said in the *Essay* respecting the desirableness of founding compositions of this kind on direct personal experience.

CHARLOTTE SMITH.

I.

POETRY AND SORROW.*

SHOULD the lone wanderer, fainting on his way,
Rest for a moment of the sultry hours,
And, though his path through thorns and roughness lay,
Pluck the wild rose or woodbine's gadding flowers;
Weaving gay wreaths beneath some sheltering tree,
The sense of sorrow he awhile may lose:
So have I sought thy flowers, fair Poesy!
So charmed my way with friendship and the Muse.
But darker now grows life's unhappy day,
Dark with new clouds of evil yet to come;
Her pencil sickening Fancy throws away,
And weary Hope reclines upon the tomb,
And points my wishes to that tranquil shore,
Where the pale spectre, Care, pursues no more!

* Elegiac Sonnets and other Poems, by Charlotte Smith. 1797.

II.

WRITTEN AT THE CLOSE OF SPRING.

THE garlands fade that Spring so lately wove;
Each simple flower, which she had nursed in dew,
Anemones that spangled every grove,
The primrosé wan, and harebell mildly blue.
No more shall violets linger in the dell,
Or purple orchis variegate the plain,
Till Spring again shall call forth every bell,
And dress with humid hands her wreaths again.
Ah, poor humanity! so frail, so fair,
Are the fond visions of thy early day,
Till tyrant passion and corrosive care
Bid all thy fairy colors fade away!
Another May new buds and flowers shall bring:
Ah! why has happiness no second Spring?

III.

ON CHILDREN AT PLAY.

SIGHING I see yon little troop at play,
By sorrow yet untouched, unhurt by care,
While free and sportive they enjoy to-day,
"Content and careless of to-morrow's fare." *
O, happy age! when Hope's unclouded ray
Lights their green path, and prompts their simple mirth,
Ere yet they feel the thorns that lurking lay
To wound the wretched pilgrims of the earth,
Making them rue the hour that gave them birth,
And threw them on a world so full of pain,
Where prosperous folly treads on patient worth,
And to deaf pride misfortune pleads in vain.
Ah! — for their future fate how many fears
Oppress my heart, and fill mine eyes with tears!

* Thomson.

IV.

TO THE MOON.

QUEEN of the silver bow! by thy pale beam,
Alone and pensive, I delight to stray,
And watch thy shadow trembling in the stream,
Or mark the floating clouds that cross thy way.
And while I gaze, thy mild and placid light
Sheds a soft calm upon my troubled breast;
And oft I think, fair planet of the night,
That in thy orb the wretched may have rest;
The sufferers of the earth perhaps may go,
Released by death, to thy benignant sphere,
And the sad children of despair and woe
Forget in thee their cup of sorrow here,
O that I soon may reach thy world serene,
Poor wearied pilgrim in this toiling scene!

V.

ON THE DEPARTURE OF THE NIGHTINGALE.

SWEET poet of the woods, a long adieu!
Farewell, soft minstrel of the early year!
Ah! 't will be long ere thou shalt sing anew,
And pour thy music on "the night's dull ear."
Whether on Spring thy wandering flights await,
Or whether silent in our groves you dwell,
The pensive muse shall own you for her mate,
And still protect the song she loves so well.
With cautious step the love-lorn youth shall glide
Through the lone brake that shades thy mossy nest;
And shepherd girls from eyes profane shall hide
The gentle bird that sings of pity best:
For still thy voice shall soft affections move,
And still be dear to sorrow and to love.

VI.

"OUT OF DOORS WHILE THE HAMLET IS SLEEPING."

WHILE thus I wander, cheerless and unblest,
And find in change of place no change of pain,
In tranquil sleep the village laborers rest,
And taste repose that I pursue in vain.
Hushed is the hamlet now; and faintly gleam
The dying embers from the casement low
Of the thatched cottage, while the Moon's wan beam
Lends a new lustre to the dazzling snow.
O'er the cold waste, amid the freezing night,
Scarce heeding whither, desolate I stray.
For me, pale eye of evening! thy soft light
Leads to no happy home; my weary way
Ends but in dark vicissitude of care:
I only fly from doubt to meet despair.

ANNA SEWARD.*

I.

RISING EARLY TO READ, ON A WINTER'S MORNING.

I LOVE to rise ere gleams the tardy light
(Winter's pale dawn); and as warm fires illume,
And cheerful tapers shine around the room,
Through misty windows bend my musing sight,
Where, round the dusky lawn, the mansions white
With shutters closed, peer faintly through the gloom
That slow recedes; while yon gray spires assume,
Rising from their dark pile, an added height
By indistinctness given: then to decree
The grateful thoughts to God, ere they unfold
To friendship or the Muse, or seek with glee
Wisdom's rich page. O hours more worth than gold,
By whose blest use we lengthen life, and, free
From drear decays of age, outlive the old.

* "The Poetical Works of Anna Seward, edited by Walter Scott, Esq. Edinburgh, 1810."

II.

CONSOLATORY POWER OF A LOVE OF NATURE.

THE evening shines in May's luxuriant pride,
And all the sunny hills at distance glow,
And all the brooks, that through the valley flow,
Seem liquid gold. O, had my fate denied
Leisure, and power to taste the sweets that glide
Through wakened minds, as the blest seasons go
On their still varying progress, for the woe
My heart has felt what balm had been supplied?
But where great Nature smiles, as here she smiles,
'Mid verdant vales, and gently swelling hills,
And glassy lakes, and mazy murmuring rills,
And narrow wood-wild lanes, her spell beguiles
Th' impatient sighs of grief, and reconciles
Poetic minds to life, with all her ills.

III.

NO BARRENNESS IN NATURE WITHOUT BEAUTY.

FROM these wild heights, where oft the mists descend
In rains that shroud the sun and chill the gale,
Each transient gleaming interval we hail,
And rove the naked valleys, and extend
Our gaze around where yon vast mountains blend
With billowy clouds that o'er their summits sail,
Pondering how little Nature's charms befriend
The barren scene, monotonous and pale,
Yet solemn when the darkening shadows fleet
Successive o'er the wide and silent hills,
Gilded by wat'ry sunbeams: then we meet
Peculiar pomp of vision. Fancy thrills;
And owns there is no scene so rude and bare
But Nature sheds or grace or grandeur there.

IV.

A STORMY NOVEMBER EVENING, GRADUALLY CLEARING UP IN A MOUNTAINOUS COUNTRY.

CEASED is the rain, but heavy drops yet fall,
From the drenched roof; yet murmurs the sunk wind
Round the dim hills; can yet a passage find
Whistling through yon cleft rock, and ruined wall.
Loud roar the angry torrents, and appall,
Though distant. A few stars, emerging kind,
With green rays tremble through their misty shrouds;
And the moon gleams between the sailing clouds
On half the darkened hill. Now blasts remove
The shadowing clouds, and on the mountain's brow,
Full-orbed she shines. Half sunk within its cove
Heaves the lone boat, with gulphing sound:—and lo!
Bright rolls the settling lake, and brimming rove
The vale's blue rills, and glitter as they flow!

HELEN MARIA WILLIAMS.

TO HOPE.*

O EVER skilled to wear the form we love!
To bid the shapes of fear and grief depart;
Come, gentle Hope! with one gay smile remove
The lasting sadness of an aching heart.
Thy voice, benign enchantress! let me hear;
Say that for me some pleasures yet shall bloom,
That fancy's radiance, friendship's precious tear,
Shall soften, or shall chase, misfortune's gloom.
But come not glowing in the dazzling ray
Which once with dear illusions charmed my eye;
O, strew no more, sweet flatterer! on my way
The flowers I fondly thought too bright to die:
Visions less fair will soothe my pensive breast,
That asks not happiness, but longs for rest.

* This sonnet stands at the head of fifteen others in the collected poems of the authoress, and she has appended to it the following note: —

"I commence the sonnets with that 'To Hope,' from a predilection in its favor for which I have a proud reason: it is that of Mr. Wordsworth, who lately honored me with his visits while at Paris, having repeated it to me from memory, after a lapse of many years."

MRS. MARY DARBY ROBINSON.*

THE TEMPLE OF CHASTITY.

HIGH on a rock coeval with the skies,
A temple stands, reared by immortal powers
To Chastity divine! Ambrosial flowers,
Twining round icicles, in columns rise,
Mingling with pendent gems of orient dyes.
Piercing the air, a golden crescent towers,
Veiled by transparent clouds; while smiling hours
Shake from their varying wings celestial joys!
The steps of spotless marble, scattered o'er
With deathless roses armed with many a thorn,
Lead to the altar. On the frozen floor,
Studded with tear-drops petrified by scorn,
Pale vestals kneel, the goddess to adore,
While Love, his arrows broke, retires forlorn.

* Earliest known mistress of George IV.; a circumstance from which the sonnet, which is not without merit in itself, derives a melancholy interest. It is extracted from the Rev. Mr. Dyce's "Specimens of British Poetesses."

SIR SAMUEL EGERTON BRYDGES.*

ECHO AND SILENCE.

In eddying course when leaves began to fly,
And Autumn in her lap the store to strew,
As 'mid wild scenes I chanced the Muse to woo
Through glens untrod, and woods that frowned on high,
Two sleeping Nymphs with wonder mute I spy!
And lo, she 's gone! In robe of dark green hue,
'T was Echo from her sister Silence flew;
For quick the hunter's horn resounded to the sky!
In shade affrighted Silence melts away;
Not so her sister: — hark! for onward still
With far heard step she takes her listening way,
Bounding from rock to rock, and hill to hill!
Ah, mark the merry maid in mockful play
With thousand mimic tones the laughing forest fill.

* From his "Recollections of Foreign Travel." It is also in his "Autobiography."

WILLIAM LISLE BOWLES.*

I.

CHURCH BELLS.

("Written on landing at Ostend, and hearing, very early in the morning, the Carillons.")

How sweet the tuneful bells' responsive peal!
As when, at opening morn, the fragrant breeze
Breathes on the trembling sense of wan disease,
So piercing to my heart their force I feel!
And hark! with lessening cadence now they fall,
And now, along the white and level tide,
They fling their melancholy music wide,
Bidding me many a tender thought recall
Of summer days, and those delightful years
When by my native streams, in life's fair prime,
The mournful magic of their mingling chime
First waked my wondering childhood into tears!
But seeming now, when all those days are o'er,
The sounds of joy once heard, and heard no more!

* Poetical Works of W. L. Bowles. 1809.

II.

A GRAVE IN A CONVENT.

If chance some pensive stranger, hither led
(His bosom glowing from majestic views,
The gorgeous dome, or the proud landscape's hues)
Should ask who sleeps beneath this lowly bed, —
'T is poor Matilda! — To the cloistered scene,
A mourner, beauteous and unknown, she came,
To shed her tears unmarked, and quench the flame
Of fruitless love: yet was her look serene
As the pale moonlight in the midnight aisle;
Her voice was soft, which yet a charm could lend,
Like that which spoke of a departed friend,
And a meek sadness sat upon her smile! —
Now, far removed from every earthly ill,
Her woes are buried, and her heart is still.

III.

TO TIME.

O TIME! who know'st a lenient hand to lay
Softest on sorrow's wound, and slowly thence
(Lulling to sad repose the weary sense)
The faint pang stealest, unperceived, away;
On thee I rest my only hope at last,
And think when thou hast dried the bitter tear
That flows in vain o'er all my soul held dear,
I may look back on every sorrow past,
And meet life's peaceful evening with a smile.
As some lone bird, at day's departing hour,
Sings in the sunbeam, of the transient shower
Forgetful, though its wings are wet the while:
Yet, ah! how much must that poor heart endure
Which hopes from thee, and thee alone, a cure!

IV.

A LANDSCAPE.

BEAUTIFUL Landscape! I could look on thee
For hours, unmindful of the storm and strife
And mingled murmurs of tumultuous life.
Here, all is still as fair, — the stream, the tree,
The wood, the sunshine on the bank; no fear, —
No thought of Time's swift wing, or closing night,
Which comes to steal away the long sweet light, —
No sighs of sad humanity are here.
Here is no tint of mortal change; the day,
Beneath whose light the dog and peasant boy
Gambol, with look and almost bark of joy,
Still seems, though centuries have passed, to stay:
Then gaze again, that shadowed scenes may teach
Lessons of peace and love, beyond all speech.

V.

WINTER EVENING AT HOME.

FAIR Moon! that at the chilly day's decline
Of sharp December, through my cottage pane
Dost lovely look, smiling, though in thy wane;
In thought to scenes serene and still as thine
Wanders my heart, whilst I by turns survey
Thee slowly wheeling on thy evening way,
And this my fire, whose dim, unequal light,
Just glimmering, bids each shadowy image fall
Sombrous and strange upon the darkening wall,
Ere the clear tapers chase the deepening night!
Yet thy still orb, seen through the freezing haze,
Shines calm and clear without; and whilst I gaze,
I think, Around me in this twilight gloom
I but remark mortality's sad doom;
Whilst hope and joy, cloudless and soft, appear
In the sweet beam that lights thy distant sphere.

VI.

HOPE.

As one who, long by wasting sickness worn,
Weary has watched the lingering night, and heard,
Heartless, the carol of the matin bird
Salute his lonely porch, now first at morn
Goes forth, leaving his melancholy bed;
He the green slope and level meadow views,
Delightful bathed in slow ascending dews;
Or marks the clouds that o'er the mountain's head,
In varying forms, fantastic wander white;
Or turns his ear to every random song
Heard the green river's winding marge along,
The whilst each sense is steeped in still delight:
With such delight o'er all my heart I feel
Sweet Hope! thy fragrance pure and healing incense steal!

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

I.

ON LEAVING SCHOOL.*

(Written at Eighteen.)

FAREWELL, parental scenes! a sad farewell!
To you my grateful heart still fondly clings,
Though fluttering round on Fancy's burnished wings,
Her tale of future joy Hope loves to tell.
Adieu, adieu! ye much-loved cloisters pale!
Ah! would those happy days return again,
When 'neath your arches, free from every stain,
I heard of guilt, and wondered at the tale!
Dear haunts! where oft my simple lays I sang,
Listening meanwhile the echoing of my feet:
Lingering I quit you with as great a pang
As when, erewhile, my weeping childhood, torn
By early sorrow from my native seat,
Mingled its tears with hers, my widowed parent lorn.

* At Christ's Hospital, where he was contemporary with Lamb, who has recorded the wonderful powers of his conversation, even when a school-boy.

II.

"WITH FIELDING'S AMELIA."*

VIRTUES and woes alike too great for man
In the soft tale oft claim the useless sigh:
For vain the attempt to realize the plan;
On folly's wings must imitation fly.
With other aim has Fielding here displayed
Each social duty and each social care;
With just yet vivid coloring portrayed
What every wife should be, what many are.
And sure the parent of a race so sweet
With double pleasure on the page shall dwell;
Each scene with sympathizing breast shall meet,
While reason still with smiles delights to tell
Maternal Hope, that the loved progeny
In all but sorrows shall Amelias be.

* The heading given to this sonnet by the author has no other words than those which are here given. The sonnet, however, is evidently addressed to some mother. Its extremely conventional style announces nothing of the future author of "Christabel" and the "Ancient Mariner"; yet we extract it in honor both of the poet and of Fielding; of the poet because Fielding was a favorite with him to the last; and of Fielding because it is one of his glories to have made an impression on a poet so fine. The "virtues and

woes" alluded to in the first line are those of Richardson; the human nature of whose novels, compared with that of Fielding, appeared to Coleridge to be forced, like flowers in a hothouse. He said that reading Fielding after Richardson was like going out of a close, stifling room into the open air.

III.

ON SEEING A YOUTH AFFECTIONATELY WELCOMED BY A SISTER.

I TOO a sister had! too cruel Death!
How sad remembrance bids my bosom heave!
Tranquil her soul as sleeping infant's breath;
Meek were her manners as a vernal eve.
Knowledge, that frequent lifts the bloated mind,
Gave her the treasure of a lowly breast;
And Wit, to venomed Malice oft assigned,
Dwelt in her bosom in a turtle's nest.
Cease, busy Memory! cease to urge the dart,
Nor on my soul her love to me impress!
For oh! I mourn in anguish; and my heart
Feels the keen pang, th' unutterable distress.
Yet wherefore grieve I that her sorrows cease,
For life was misery, and the grave is peace.

IV.

TO BOWLES.

My heart has thanked thee, Bowles! for those soft strains,
Whose sadness soothes me, like the murmuring
Of wild-bees in the sunny showers of spring!
For hence, not callous to the mourner's pains
Through youth's gay prime and thornless paths I went:
And when the mightier throes of mind began,
And drove me forth, a thought-bewildered man!
Their mild and manliest melancholy lent
A mingled charm, such as the pang consigned
To slumber, though the big tear it renewed;
Bidding a strange, mysterious pleasure brood
Over the wavy and tumultuous mind,
As the great Spirit erst with plastic sweep
Moved on the darkness of the unformed deep.

V.

THOUGHTS DURING THE SINGING OF A BEAUTIFUL SONG.

To William Linley.

While my young cheek retains its healthful hues,
And I have many friends who hold me dear,
Linley! methinks I would not often hear
Such melodies as thine, lest I should lose
All memory of the wrongs and sore distress
For which my miserable brethren weep!
But should uncomforted misfortunes steep
My daily bread in tears and bitterness,
And if at death's dread moment I should lie
With no beloved face at my bedside,
To fix the last glance of my closing eye,
Methinks such strains, breathed by my angel guide,
Would make me pass the cup of anguish by,
Mix with the blest, nor know that I had died!

VI.

TO THE AUTHOR OF "THE ROBBERS."

SCHILLER! that hour I would have wished to die,
If through the shuddering midnight I had sent
From the dark dungeon of the tower time-rent
That fearful voice, a famished Father's cry,
Lest in some after moment aught more mean
Might stamp me mortal! A triumphant shout
Black Horror screamed, and all her goblin rout
Diminished shrunk from the more withering scene!
Ah, bard tremendous in sublimity!
Could I behold thee in thy loftier mood,
Wandering at eve with finely frenzied eye
Beneath some vast old tempest-swinging wood!
Awhile with mute awe gazing I would brood:
Then weep aloud in a wild ecstasy!

VII.

ON THE LAST FAILURE OF KOSCIUSKO.

O WHAT a loud and fearful shriek was there,
As though a thousand souls one death-groan poured!
Ah me! they saw beneath a hireling's sword
Their KOSCIUSKO fall! Through the swart air
(As pauses the tired Cossack's barbarous yell
Of triumph) on the chill and midnight gale
Rises with frantic burst, or sadder swell,
The dirge of murdered Hope! while Freedom pale
Bends in such anguish o'er her destined bier,
As if from eldest time some Spirit meek
Had gathered in a mystic urn each tear
That ever on a patriot's furrowed cheek
Fit channel found; and she had drained the bowl
In the mere wilfulness and sick despair of soul!

VIII.

NEWS OF THE BIRTH OF A CHILD.

(Composed on a journey homeward, the author having received intelligence of the birth of a son, September 20, 1796.)

OFT o'er my brain does that strange fancy roll
Which makes the present (while the flash doth last)
Seem a mere semblance of some unknown past,
Mixed with such feelings as perplex the soul
Self-questioned in her sleep; and some have said
We lived, ere yet this robe of flesh we wore.
O my sweet baby! when I reach my door,
If heavy looks should tell me thou art dead
(As sometimes, through excess of hope, I fear)
I think that I should struggle to believe
Thou wert a spirit, to this nether sphere
Sentenced for some more venial crime to grieve;
Didst scream, then spring to meet Heaven's quick reprieve,
While we wept idly o'er thy little bier.

IX.

A NEW-BORN CHILD AND ITS PARENT.

(To a friend who asked the author how he felt when the nurse first presented his infant to him.)

CHARLES! my slow heart was only sad, when first
I scanned that face of feeble infancy;
For dimly on my thoughtful spirit burst
All I had been, and all my child might be!
But when I saw it on its mother's arm,
And hanging at her bosom (she the while
Bent o'er its features with a tearful smile)
Then I was thrilled and melted, and most warm
Impressed a father's kiss; and all beguiled
Of dark remembrance and presageful fear,
I seemed to see an angel form appear —
'T was even thine, beloved woman mild!
So for the mother's sake the child was dear,
And dearer was the mother for the child.

X.

FAREWELL TO LOVE.

FAREWELL, sweet Love! yet blame you not my truth:
More fondly ne'er did mother eye her child
Than I your form. *Yours* were my hopes of youth,
And as *you* shaped my thoughts, I sighed or smiled.
While most were wooing wealth, or gayly swerving
To pleasure's secret haunts, and some apart
Stood strong in pride, self-conscious of deserving,
To you I gave my whole, weak, wishing heart.
And when I met the maid that realized
Your fair creations, and had won her kindness,
Say but for her if aught in earth I prized!
Your dream alone I dreamt, and caught your blindness.
O grief! — but farewell, Love! I will go play me
With thoughts that please me less, and less betray me.

XI.

FANCY IN NUBIBUS.

(Composed by the sea-side, October, 1817.)

O, IT is pleasant, with a heart at ease,
Just after sunset, or by moonlight skies,
To make the shifting clouds be what you please,
Or let the easily persuaded eyes
Own each quaint likeness issuing from the mould
Of a friend's fancy; or with head bent low,
And cheek aslant, see rivers flow of gold
'Twixt crimson banks; and then, a traveller, go
From mount to mount, through CLOUDLAND, gorgeous land!
Or listening to the tide, with closéd sight,
Be that blind bard, who on the Chian strand
By those deep sounds possessed, with inward light
Beheld the Iliad and the Odyssee
Rise to the swelling of the voiceful sea.*

* This sonnet is very characteristic of the rich indolence of the author's temperament. The very toning of the rhymes is as careless as the mood in which he is indulging.

XII.

TO THE RIVER OTTER.

DEAR native brook! wild streamlet of the West!
How many various-fated years have past,
What happy, and what mournful hours, since last
I skimmed the smooth thin stone along thy breast,
Numbering its light leaps! yet so deep imprest
Sink the sweet scenes of childhood, that mine eyes
I never shut amid the sunny ray,
But straight with all their tints thy waters rise,
Thy crossing-plank, thy marge with willows gray,
And bedded sand, that, veined with various dyes,
Gleamed through thy bright transparence! On my way
Visions of childhood! oft have ye beguiled
Lone manhood's cares, yet waking fondest sighs:
Ah! that once more I were a careless child!

CHARLES LAMB.

I.

TO MISS KELLY, THE ACTRESS.

You are not, Kelly, of the common strain,
That stoop their pride and female honor down
To please that many-headed beast, *The Town*,
And vend their lavish smiles and tricks for gain;
By fortune thrown amid the actor's train,
You keep your native dignity of thought;
The plaudits that attend you come unsought,
As tributes due unto your natural vein.
Your tears have passion in them, and a grace
Of genuine freshness, which our hearts avow;
Your smiles are winds whose ways we cannot trace,
That vanish and return we know not how, —
And please the better from a pensive face,
A thoughtful eye, and a reflecting brow.

II.

CRAVING FOR LEISURE.

They talk of Time, and of Time's galling yoke,
That like a millstone on man's mind doth press,
Which only works and business can redress;
Of divine Leisure such foul lies are spoke,
Wounding her fair gifts with calumnious stroke.
But might I, fed with silent meditation,
Assoiléd live from that fiend Occupation —
Improbus Labor, which my spirits hath broke —
I 'd drink of time's rich cup, and never surfeit;
Fling in more days than went to make the gem
That crowned the white top of Methusalem;
Yea, on my weak neck take, and never forfeit,
Like Atlas bearing up the dainty sky,
The heaven-sweet burden of eternity.

III.

IN THE ALBUM OF EDITH S——.

In Christian world Mary the garland wears!
Rebecca sweetens on a Hebrew's ear;
Quakers for pure Priscilla are more clear;
And the light Gaul by amorous Ninon swears;
Among the lesser lights how Lucy shines!
What air of fragrance Rosamond throws round!
How like a hymn doth sweet Cecilia sound!
Of Marthas and of Abigails few lines
Have bragged in verse. Of coarsest household stuff
Should homely Joan be fashioned. But can
You Barbara resist, or Marian?
And is not Clare for love excuse enough?
Yet, by my faith in numbers, I profess,
These all than Saxon Edith please me less.

IV.

WRITTEN AT CAMBRIDGE.

I WAS not trained in academic bowers,
And to those learned streams I nothing owe
Which copious from those twin fair founts do flow;
Mine have been anything but studious hours.
Yet can I fancy, wandering 'mid thy towers,
Myself a nurseling, Granta, of thy lap;
My brow seems tightening with the doctor's cap,
And I walk *gownéd;* feel unusual powers!
Strange forms of logic clothe my admiring speech,
Old Ramus' * ghost is busy at my brain,
And my skull teems with notions infinite.
Be still, ye reeds of Camus, while I teach
Truths which transcend the searching schoolmen's vein,
And half had staggered that stout Stagirite.†

* The famous French logician. † Aristotle.

CHARLES LLOYD.*

TO NOVEMBER.

DISMAL November! me it soothes to view,
At parting day, the scanty foliage fall
From the wet fruit-tree; or the gray stone-wall,
Whose cold films glisten with unwholesome dew;
To watch the yellow mists from the dank earth
Enfold the neighboring copse; while, as they pass,
The silent rain-drops bend the long rank grass,
Which wraps some blossom's unmaturéd birth.
And through my cot's lone lattice, glimmering gray,
The damp, chill evenings have a charm for me,
Dismal November! for strange vacancy
Summoneth then my very heart away!
Till from mist-hidden spire comes the slow knell,
And says, that in the still air Death doth dwell!

* "Nugæ Canoræ. Poems by Charles Lloyd, Author of 'Edmund Oliver,' 'Isabel,' and translator of Alfieri."

BERNARD BARTON.

I.

TO MY WIFE.

THE butterfly, which sports on gaudy wing;
The brawling brooklet, lost in foam and spray,
As it goes dancing on its idle way;
The sunflower, in broad daylight glistening;
Are types of her who in the festive ring
Lives but to bask in fashion's vain display,
And glittering through her bright but useless day,
"Flaunts, and goes down a disregarded thing!"
Thy emblem, Lucy, is the busy bee,
Whose industry for future hours provides;
The gentle streamlet, gladding as it glides
Unseen along; the flower which gives the lea
Fragrance and loveliness, are types of thee,
And of the active worth thy modest merit hides

II.

TO A GRANDMOTHER.*

"Old age is dark and unlovely." — OSSIAN.

O, SAY not so! A bright old age is thine,
Calm as the gentle light of summer eves,
Ere twilight dim her dusky mantle weaves;
Because to thee is given, in thy decline,
A heart that does not thanklessly repine
At aught of which the hand of God bereaves,
Yet all He sends with gratitude receives; —
May such a quiet, thankful close be mine!
And hence thy fireside chair appears to me
A peaceful throne, which thou wert formed to fill;
Thy children ministers who do thy will;
And those grandchildren, sporting round thy knee,
Thy little subjects, looking up to thee
As one who claims their fond allegiance still.

* A good sonnet. Dixi. — CHARLES LAMB.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

I.

PLEASANT, VOLUNTARY PRISON OF THE SONNET.

NUNS fret not at their convent's narrow room;
And hermits are contented with their cells;
And students with their pensive citadels;
Maids at the wheel, the weaver at his loom,
Sit blithe and happy; bees that soar for bloom,
High as the highest peak of Furness Fells,
Will murmur by the hour in foxglove bells:
In truth the prison unto which we doom
Ourselves no prison is; and hence to me,
In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound
Within the sonnet's scanty plot of ground,
Pleased if some souls (for such there needs must be)
Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,
Should find brief solace there, as I have found.*

* It is a very bold general proposition to say that "nuns fret not at their narrow rooms" and that "hermits are content with their cells." Thousands of nuns, there is no doubt, have fretted horribly, and do fret; and hermitages have proved so little satisfactory, that we no longer hear of their existence in civilized countries. We are to suppose, however, that the poet alludes only to such nuns and hermits as have been willing to be solitary. So also in regard to

II.

PLACID OBJECTS OF CONTEMPLATION.

Not Love, not War, nor the tumultuous swell
Of civil conflict, nor the wrecks of change,
Nor Duty struggling with afflictions strange,
Not these alone inspire the tuneful shell;
But where untroubled peace and concord dwell,
There also is the Muse not loath to range,
Watching the twilight smoke of cot or grange
Skyward ascending from a woody dell.
Meek aspirations please her, lone endeavor,
And sage content, and placid melancholy;
She loves to gaze upon a crystal river,
Diaphanous, because it travels slowly.
Soft is the music that would charm forever;
The flower of sweetest smell is shy and lowly.

the spinning maids, and the weavers. The instances are not thoroughly happy; for the spinning and the weaving are too often anything but voluntary, however cheerfully made the best of. The rest of the sonnet is very good and pleasant, and the reflection respecting "the weight of too much liberty" admirable.

III.

WANTING SLEEP.

O GENTLE Sleep! do they belong to thee,
These twinklings of oblivion? Thou dost love
To sit in meekness, like the brooding Dove,
A captive never wishing to be free.
This tiresome night, O Sleep! thou art to me
A Fly, that up and down himself doth shove
Upon a fretful rivulet, now above,
Now on the water vexed with mockery.
I have no pain that calls for patience, no;
Hence am I cross and peevish as a child,
Am pleased by fits to have thee for my foe,
Yet ever willing to be reconciled:
O gentle Creature! do not use me so,
But once and deeply let me be beguiled.

IV.

LANDSCAPE PAINTING.

(Suggested by a picture painted by Sir George Howland Beaumont, Bart.)

PRAISED be the Art whose subtle power could stay
Yon cloud, and fix it in that glorious shape;
Nor would permit the thin smoke to escape,
Nor those bright sunbeams to forsake the day;
Which stopped that band of travellers on their way,
Ere they were lost within the shady wood;
And showed the bark upon the glassy flood
Forever anchored in her sheltering bay.
Soul-soothing Art! which Morning, Noontide, Even,
Do serve with all their changeful pageantry;
Thou, with ambition modest yet sublime,
Here, for the sight of mortal man, hast given
To one brief moment caught from fleeting time
The appropriate calm of blest eternity.

V.

A LIGHT IN A DISTANT WINDOW AMONG MOUNTAINS.

EVEN as a dragon's eye that feels the stress
Of a bedimming sleep, or as a lamp
Suddenly glaring through sepulchral damp,
So burns yon Taper 'mid a black recess
Of mountains, silent, dreary, motionless;
The Lake below reflects it not; the sky,
Muffled in clouds, affords no company
To mitigate and cheer its loneliness.
Yet, round the body of that joyless Thing
Which sends so far its melancholy light,
Perhaps are seated in domestic ring
A gay society, with faces bright,
Conversing, reading, laughing;—or they sing,
While hearts and voices in the song unite.

VI.

PERSONAL TALK.

I AM not one who much or oft delight
To season my fireside with personal talk
Of friends who live within an easy walk,
Or neighbors daily, weekly, in my sight;
And, for my chance acquaintance, ladies bright,
Sons, mothers, maidens withering on the stalk,
These all wear out of me, like forms with chalk
Painted on rich men's floors, for one feast-night.
Better than such discourse doth silence long,
Long, barren silence, square with my desire;
To sit without emotion, hope, or aim,
In the loved presence of my cottage fire,
And listen to the flapping of the flame,
Or kettle whispering its faint undersong.

VII.

PERSONAL TALK.

(CONTINUED.)

"YET life," you say, "is life; we have seen and see,
And with a living pleasure we describe;
And fits of sprightly malice do but bribe
The languid mind into activity.
Sound sense, and love itself, and mirth and glee
Are fostered by the comment and the gibe."
Even be it so: yet still among your tribe,
Our daily world's true worldlings, rank not me!
Children are blest, and powerful; their world lies
More justly balanced; partly at their feet,
And part far from them: — sweetest melodies
Are those that are by distance made more sweet;
Whose mind is but the mind of his own eyes,
He is a slave; the meanest we can meet.

* "In notes by distance made more sweet." — COLLINS.

VIII.

PERSONAL TALK AND BOOKS.

WINGS have we, and as far as we can go
We may find pleasure: wilderness and wood,
Blank ocean and mere sky, support that mood
Which with the lofty sanctifies the low:
Dreams, books, are each a world; and books, we know,
Are a substantial world, both pure and good:
Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
Our pastime and our happiness will grow.
There find I personal themes, a plenteous store,
Matter wherein right voluble am I,
To which I listen with a ready ear.
Two shall be named, pre-eminently dear:—
The gentle Lady married to the Moor,
And heavenly Una with her milk-white Lamb.

IX.

PERSONAL TALK.

(CONCLUDED.)

NOR can I not believe but that hereby
Great gains are mine; for thus I live remote
From evil-speaking; rancor, never sought,
Comes to me not; malignant truth, or lie.
Hence have I genial seasons, hence have I
Smooth passions, smooth discourse, and joyous thought;
And thus from day to day my little boat
Rocks in its harbor, lodging peaceably.
Blessings be with them, and eternal praise,
Who gave us nobler loves and nobler cares, —
The Poets, who on earth have made us heirs
Of truth and pure delight by heavenly lays!
Oh! might my name be numbered among theirs,
Then gladly would I end my mortal days.

X.

"COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE, SEPT. 3, 1803."

EARTH has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty.
This city now doth like a garment wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky,
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep,
In his first splendor, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still! *

* I cannot refrain from asking the reader to recall his feelings when he has happened to pass along the streets of a city yet in its slumbers, and, unless my own deceive me, he will find, I think, an echo to them in this sonnet.

XI.

A PARSONAGE IN OXFORDSHIRE.

WHERE holy ground begins, unhallowed ends,
Is marked by no distinguishable line;
The turf unites, the pathways intertwine;
And, wheresoe'er the stealing footstep tends,
Garden, and that domain where kindred, friends,
And neighbors rest together, here confound
Their several features, mingled like the sound
Of many waters, or as evening blends
With shady night. Soft airs from shrub and flower
Waft fragrant greetings to each silent grave;
And while those lofty poplars gently wave
Their tops, between them comes and goes a sky
Bright as the glimpses of eternity
To saints accorded in their mortal hour.*

* There is great merit in the above as a piece of landscape description, illuminated with a very rich moral light, the imagery of the closing lines especially evincing admirable taste.

XII.

LONDON, 1802.*

MILTON! thou shouldst be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee: she is a fen
Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
O raise us up, return to us again,
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power!
Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart:
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

* So headed by the author. England had then made its short-lived peace with France under the Consulate; but why Mr. Wordsworth should call upon the spirit of the great regicide to object to it, in behalf of the ordinary policy of George III., is not easy to see. It was not uncommon for our church and state poet to make use of Milton and his friends in this manner, whenever it suited him. He appears to have assumed as a matter of course, that Milton, being at once a great poet and a moralist, must of necessity have been

XIII.

SONNET.

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free;
The holy time is quiet as a nun,
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity;
The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the sea:
Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth, with his eternal motion, make
A sound like thunder — everlastingly.
Dear child! dear girl! that walkest with me here,
If thou appear'st untouched by solemn thought,
Thy nature is not, therefore, less divine:
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;
And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee, when we know it not.*

the property of him and his party, however widely the Republicans and they may have differed in other respects. A strange poetical license surely!

* In the same spirit Coleridge speaks of "the *sacred* light of Childhood." — *The Friend*, London, 1818, iii. 46.

XIV.

TO THE PLANET VENUS, — AN EVENING STAR.

(Composed at Loch-Lomond.)

THOUGH joy attend thee orient at the birth
Of dawn, it cheers the lofty spirit most
To watch thy course when daylight, fled from earth,
In the gray sky hath left his lingering ghost,
Perplexed, as if between a splendor lost
And splendor slowly mustering. Since the sun,
The absolute, the world-absorbing one,
Relinquished half his empire to the host,
Emboldened by thy guidance, holy star,
Holy as princely, who that looks on thee,
Touching, as now, in thy humility
The mountain borders of this seat of care,
Can question that thy countenance is bright,
Celestial Power! as much with love as light.

XV.

AFTER VISITING THE FIELD OF WATERLOO.

A WINGÉD Goddess, clothed in vesture wrought
Of rainbow colors, — one whose port was bold,
Whose overburdened hand could scarcely hold
The glittering crowns and garlands which it brought,
Hovered in air above the far-famed spot.
She vanished, leaving prospect blank and cold
Of wind-swept corn that wide around us rolled
In dreary billows, wood, and meagre cot,
And monuments that soon must disappear;
Yet a dread local recompense we found;
While glory seemed betrayed, while patriot zeal
Sank in our hearts, we felt as men *should* feel
With such vast hoards of hidden carnage near;
And horror breathing from the silent ground.*

* Yet in another poem on this subject, he says that "Carnage" is God's "daughter"! Such perilous inconsistency is there in playing with the edge-tools of theological metaphysics.

XVI.

THE WORST PANGS OF SORROW.

SURPRISED by joy, impatient as the wind
I turned to share the transport — oh! with whom
But Thee, deep buried in the silent tomb,
That spot which no vicissitude can find?
Love, faithful love, recalled thee to my mind, —
But how could I forget thee? Through what power,
Even for the least division of an hour,
Have I been so beguiled as to be blind
To my most grievous loss? That thought's return
Was the worst pang that sorrow ever bore,
Save one, one only, when I stood forlorn,
Knowing my heart's best treasure was no more;
That neither present time nor years unborn
Could to my sight that heavenly face restore.

XVII.

DEATH CONQUERING AND DEATH CONQUERED.

METHOUGHT I saw the footsteps of a throne
Which mists and vapors from mine eyes did shroud, —
Nor view of who might sit thereon allowed;
But all the steps and ground about were strown
With sights the ruefullest that flesh and bone
Ever put on; a miserable crowd,
Sick, hale, old, young, who cried before that cloud,
"Thou art our King, O Death! to thee we groan."
Those steps I clomb; the mists before me gave
Smooth way; and I beheld the face of one
Sleeping alone within a mossy cave,
With her face up to heaven; that seemed to have
Pleasing remembrance of a thought foregone;
A lovely Beauty in a summer grave!*

* I hope I am doing no injustice to Wordsworth. If so, the plenitude of his genius can afford it. But I have an impression of having met with this sonnet, or something very like it, before; I think, in *Italian*.

ROBERT SOUTHEY.

TO A LARK.

O THOU sweet lark, who in the heaven so high
Twinkling thy wings, dost sing so joyfully,
I watch thee soaring with a deep delight,
And when at last I turn mine aching eye
That lags below thee in the infinite,
Still in my heart receive thy melody.
O thou sweet lark, that I had wings like thee!
Not for the joy it were in yon blue light
Upward to mount, and from my heavenly height
Gaze on the creeping multitude below;
But that I soon would wing my eager flight
To that loved home, where Fancy even now
Hath fled, and Hope looks onward through a tear,
Counting the weary hours that hold her here!

II.

THE SHIP SETTING OUT.

STATELY yon vessel sails adown the tide,
To some far distant land adventurous bound;
The sailors' busy cries from side to side
Pealing among the echoing rocks resound;
A patient, thoughtless, much-enduring band,
Joyful they enter on their ocean way,
With shouts exulting leave their native land,
And know no care beyond the present day.
But is there no poor mourner left behind
Who sorrows for a child or husband there?
Who at the howling of the midnight wind
Will wake, and tremble in her boding prayer?
So may her voice be heard, and Heaven be kind!
Go, gallant Ship, and be thy fortune fair!

III.

THE SHIP IN A STORM.

O God! have mercy in this dreadful hour
On the poor mariner! In comfort here,
Safe sheltered as I am, I almost fear
The blast that rages with resistless power.-
What were it now to toss upon the waves,
The maddened waves, and know no succor near;
The howling of the storm alone to hear,
And the wild sea that to the tempest raves;
To gaze amid the horrors of the night,
And only see the billows' gleaming light;
Then in the dread of death to think of her
Who, as she listens sleepless to the gale,
Puts up a silent prayer, and waxes pale!
O God! have mercy on the mariner!

IV.

THE SHIP RETURNING.

SHE comes majestic with her swelling sails,
The gallant ship; along her watery way
Homeward she drives before the favoring gales.
Now flirting at their length the streamers play,
And now they ripple with the ruffling breeze.
Hark to the sailors' shouts! the rocks rebound,
Thundering in echoes to the joyful sound.
Long have they voyaged o'er the distant seas;
And what a heart-delight they feel at last,
So many toils, so many dangers past,
To view the port desired, he only knows
Who on the stormy deep for many a day
Hath tost, aweary of his watery way,
And watched, all anxious, every wind that blows!

EDWARD HOVELL-THURLOW, LORD THURLOW.

I.

SUMMER.

THE Summer, the divinest Summer burns;
The skies are bright with azure and with gold;
The mavis and the nightingale, by turns,
Amid the woods a soft enchantment hold;
The flowering woods, with glory and delight,
Their tender leaves unto the air have spread;
The wanton air, amid their valleys bright,
Doth softly fly, and a light fragrance shed;
The nymphs within the silver fountains play,
And angels on the golden banks recline
Wherein great Flora, in her bright array,
Hath sprinkled her ambrosial sweets divine:
Or, else, I gaze upon that beauteous face,
O Amoret! and think these sweets have place.

II.

THE HARVEST MOON.

THE crimson Moon, uprising from the sea,
With large delight foretells the harvest near:
Ye shepherds, now prepare your melody,
To greet the soft appearance of her sphere!
And, like a page, enamored of her train,
The star of even glimmers in the west:
Then raise, ye shepherds, your observant strain,
That so of the Great Shepherd here are blest!
Our fields are full of the time-ripened grain,
Our vineyards with the purple clusters swell:
Her golden splendor glimmers on the main,
And vales and mountains her bright glory tell:
Then sing, ye shepherds! for the time has come
When we must bring the enrichéd harvest home!

PROFESSOR JOHN WILSON.

I.

THE EVENING CLOUD.

A CLOUD lay cradled near the setting sun, —
A gleam of crimson tinged its braided snow;
Long had I watched the glory moving on,
O'er the still radiance of the lake below;
Tranquil its spirit seemed, and floated slow;
E'en in its very motion there was rest;
While every breath of eve that chanced to blow
Wafted the traveller to the beauteous west.
Emblem, methought, of the departed soul,
To whose white robe the gleam of bliss is given,
And by the breath of mercy made to roll
Right onward to the golden gates of Heaven;
Where to the eye of faith it peaceful lies,
And tells to man its glorious destinies.

II.

THE LAKE IN STORM.*

THERE is a lake hid far among the hills,
That raves around the throne of solitude,
Not fed by gentle streams, or playful rills,
But headlong cataract and rushing flood:
There gleam no lovely hues of hanging wood,
No spot of sunshine lights her sullen side;
For horror shaped the wild in wrathful mood,
And o'er the tempest heaved the mountain's pride.
If thou art one, in dark presumption blind,
Who vainly deem'st no spirit like to thine,
That lofty genius deifies thy mind,
Fall prostrate here at Nature's stormy shrine,
And, as the thunderous scene disturbs thy heart,
Lift thy changed eye, and own how low thou art.

* From "The Isle of Palms."

III.

THE LAKE IN CALM.

Is this the lake, the cradle of the storms,
Where silence never tames the mountain-roar,
Where poets fear their self-created forms,
Or, sunk in trance severe, their God adore?
Is this the lake, forever dark and loud
With wave and tempest, cataract and cloud?
Wondrous, O Nature! is thy sovereign power,
That gives to horror hours of peaceful mirth;
For here might beauty build her summer-bower!
Lo! where yon rainbow spans the smiling earth,
And, clothed in glory, through a silent shower
The mighty sun comes forth, a godlike birth;
While, 'neath his loving eye, the gentle Lake
Lies like a sleeping child too blest to wake!

IV.

NATURE'S ORGAN-MUSIC IN THE MOUNTAINS.

Go up among the mountains, when the storm
  Of midnight howls, but go in that wild mood,
  When the soul loves tumultuous solitude,
And through the haunted air, each giant form
  Of swinging pine, black rock, or ghostly cloud,
  That veils some fearful cataract tumbling loud,
Seems to thy breathless heart with life imbued.
  'Mid those gaunt, shapeless things thou art alone!
The mind exists, thinks, trembles through the ear,
  The memory of the human world is gone,
And time and space seem living only *here*.
  O, worship thou the visions then made known,
While sable glooms round Nature's temple roll,
And her dread anthem peals into thy soul!

CHARLES MACKAY.

I.

ANGELIC VISITANTS.

On Mamre's plain, beside the Patriarch's door,
The ministering angels sat; the world was young,
And men beheld what they behold no more;—
Ah, no! The harps of Heaven are not unstrung!
The angelic visitants may yet appear
To those who seek them! Lo! at Virtue's side,
Its friend, its prop, its solace, and its guide,
Walks Faith, with upturned eyes and voice of cheer,
A visible angel. Lo! at Sorrow's call,
Hope hastens down, an angel fair and kind,
And whispers comfort whatsoe'er befall;
While Charity, the seraph of the mind,
White-robed and pure, becomes each good man's guest,
And makes this Earth a Heaven to all who love her best.

II.

LOVE AND BEAUTY.

BEAUTY and Love — and are they not the same?
The one is both, and both are but the one,
Pervasive they of all around the sun,
Of one same essence, differing but in name.
Lo! when pure Love lights his immortal flame,
He, and all Earth and Heaven in Beauty shine;
And when true Beauty shows her face divine,
Love permeates the universal frame.
Holy of holies! mystery sublime!
Who truly loves is beautiful to see,
And scatters Beauty wheresoe'er he goes —
They fill all space; they move the wheels of Time;
And evermore from their dread unity
Through all the firmaments Life's ocean flows.

WILLIAM SOTHEBY.

THE WINTER'S MORN.

ARTIST unseen! that, dipt in frozen dew,
Hast on the glittering glass thy pencil laid,
Ere from yon sun the transient visions fade,
Swift let me trace the forms thy fancy drew!
Thy towers and palaces of diamond hue,
Rivers and lakes of lucid crystal made,
And hung in air hoar trees of branching shade,
That liquid pearl distil: thy scenes renew,
Whate'er old bards or later fictions feign,
Of secret grottos underneath the wave,
Where Nereids roof with spar the amber cave;
Or bowers of bliss, where sport the fairy train,
Who, frequent by the moonlight wanderer seen,
Circle with radiant gems the dewy green.

HENRY KIRKE WHITE.

I.

ON HEARING THE SOUNDS OF AN ÆOLIAN HARP.

So ravishingly soft upon the tide
Of the infuriate gust it did career,
It might have soothed its rugged charioteer,
And sunk him to a zephyr, then it died,
Melting in melody, and I descried,
Borne to some wizard stream, the form appear
Of Druid sage, who on the far-off ear
Poured his lone song, to which the surge replied;
Or thought I heard the hapless pilgrim's knell,
Lost in some wild enchanted forest's bounds,
By unseen beings sung; or are these sounds
Such as, 't is said, at night are known to swell
By startled shepherd on the lonely heath,
Keeping his night-watch sad, portending death!

II.

RETIREMENT.

GIVE me a cottage on some Cambrian wild,
Where, far from cities, I may spend my days,
And, by the beauties of the scene beguiled,
May pity man's pursuits, and shun his ways.
While on the rock I mark the browsing goat,
List to the mountain-torrent's distant noise,
Or the hoarse bittern's solitary note,
I shall not want the world's delusive joys;
But with my little scrip, my book, my lyre,
Shall think my lot complete, nor covet more;
And, when, with time, shall wane the vital fire,
I 'll raise my pillow on the desert shore,
And lay me down to rest where the wild wave
Shall make sweet music o'er my lonely grave.

JOSEPH BLANCO WHITE.*

TO NIGHT.

Mysterious Night! when our first parent knew
Thee from report divine, and heard thy name,
Did he not tremble for this lovely frame,
This glorious canopy of light and blue?
Yet 'neath a curtain of translucent dew,
Bathed in the rays of the great setting flame,
Hesperus with the host of heaven came,
And, lo! creation widened in man's view.
Who could have thought such darkness lay concealed
Within thy beams, O Sun! or who could find,
Whilst fly, and leaf, and insect stood revealed,
That to such countless orbs thou mad'st us blind?
Why do we, then, shun death with anxious strife?
If light can thus deceive, wherefore not life?

* The well-known and estimable Anglo-Spaniard, who was born of an English family which had emigrated to the Peninsula, and who came back to the country of his ancestors with other Spanish patriots fleeing from the tyranny of the infamous Ferdinand the Second.

Coleridge pronounced this sonnet "the best in the English language." Perhaps if he had said the best in English poetry, the judgment might have appeared less disputable. In language some little imperfections are discernible, which do not detract, however, from its singular merits even in that respect, especially considering

GEORGE GORDON NOEL, LORD BYRON.

I.

THE PRISONER OF CHILLON.

ETERNAL spirit of the chainless mind!
Brightest in dungeons, Liberty! thou art;
For there thy habitation is the heart,—
The heart which love of thee alone can bind;
And when thy sons to fetters are consigned,—
To fetters, and the damp vault's dayless gloom,
Their country conquers with their martyrdom,
And Freedom's fame finds wings on every wind.
Chillon! thy prison is a holy place,
And thy sad floor an altar; for 't was trod,
Until his very steps have left a trace
Worn, as if thy cold pavement were a sod,
By Bonnivard! May none those marks efface!
For they appeal from tyranny to God.

that the author was not young when he came into England, and that he then spoke English like a foreigner.

In point of *thought* the sonnet stands supreme, perhaps above all in any language. Nor can we ponder it too deeply, or with too hopeful a reverence.

II.

HEAVENLY AND EARTHLY BEAUTY COMBINED.

THY cheek is pale with thought, but not from woe,
And yet so lovely that if mirth could flush
Its rose of whiteness with the brightest blush,
My heart would wish away that ruder glow;—
And dazzle not thy deep blue eyes,—but oh!
While gazing on them sterner eyes will gush,
And into mine my mother's weakness rush,
Soft as the last drops round heaven's airy bow.
For, through thy long dark lashes, low depending,
The soul of melancholy gentleness
Gleams like a seraph from the sky descending,
Above all pain, yet pitying all distress;
At once such majesty with sweetness blending,
I worship more, but cannot love thee less.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

I.

TO WORDSWORTH.

POET of Nature! thou hast wept to know
That things depart which never may return!
Childhood and youth, friendship and love's first glow,
Have fled like sweet dreams, leaving thee to mourn.
These common woes I feel. One loss is mine
Which thou too feel'st; yet I alone deplore.
Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine
On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar:
Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
Above the blind and battling multitude.
In honored poverty thy voice did weave
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty: —
Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

II.

POLITICAL GREATNESS.

Nor happiness, nor majesty, nor fame,
Nor peace, nor strength, nor skill in arms or arts,
Shepherd those herds whom tyranny makes tame;
Verse echoes not one beating of their hearts,
History is but the shadow of their shame;
Art veils her glass, or from the pageant starts,
As to oblivion their blind millions fleet,
Staining that heaven with obscene imagery
Of their own likeness. What are numbers knit
By force or custom? Man, who man would be,
Must rule the empire of himself; in it
Must be supreme, establishing his throne
On vanquished will, quelling the anarchy
Of hopes and fears, being himself alone.

III.

OZYMANDIAS.

I MET a traveller from an antique land,
Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive (stamped on these lifeless things)
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed';
And on the pedestal these words appear:—
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye mighty! and despair!'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away!"

IV.

SONNET.

YE hasten to the dead! What seek ye there,
Ye restless thoughts and busy purposes
Of the idle brain, which the world's livery wear?
O thou quick Heart, which pantest to possess
All that anticipation feigneth fair!
Thou vainly curious mind which wouldest guess
Whence thou didst come, and whither thou may'st go,
And that which never yet was known wouldst know —
O, whither hasten ye, that thus ye press
With such swift feet life's green and pleasant path,
Seeking alike from happiness and woe
A refuge in the cavern of gray death?
O heart, and mind, and thoughts! What thing do you
Hope to inherit in the grave below?

JOHN KEATS.

I.

"ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER."

MUCH have I travelled in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been,
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies,
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortes when with eagle eyes
He stared * at the Pacific — and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise —
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

* "Stared" has been thought by some too violent, but it is precisely the word required by the occasion. The Spaniard was too original and ardent a man either to look, or to affect to look, coldly superior to it. His "eagle eyes" are from life, as may be seen by Titian's portrait of him.

II.

ON THE GRASSHOPPER AND CRICKET.

THE Poetry of Earth is never dead:
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead:
That is the Grasshopper's; he takes the lead
In summer luxury; he has never done
With his delights, for when tired out with fun,
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.
The Poetry of Earth is ceasing never:
On a lone winter evening, when the frost
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems to one in drowsiness half lost
The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

III.

ON READING "THE FLOWER AND THE LEAF" OF CHAUCER.

THIS pleasant tale is like a little copse,
The honeyed lines so freshly interlace
To keep the reader in so sweet a place;
So that he here and there full-hearted stops;
And oftentimes he feels the dewy drops
Come cool and suddenly against his face,
And by the wandering melody may trace
Which way the tender-leggéd linnet hops.
O what a charm hath white Simplicity!
What mighty power hath this gentle story!
I, that forever feel athirst for glory,
Could at this moment be content to lie
Meekly upon the grass, as those whose sobbings
Were heard of none beside the mournful robins.

IV.

"ON LEIGH HUNT'S POEM, THE 'STORY' OF RIMINI."

WHO loves to peer up at the morning sun,
With half-shut eyes and comfortable cheek,
Let him, with this sweet tale, full often seek
For meadows where the little rivers run;
Who loves to linger with that brightest one
Of Heaven — Hesperus — let him lowly speak
These numbers to the night, and starlight meek,
Or moon, if that her hunting be begun.
He who knows these delights, and too is prone
To moralize upon a smile or tear,
Will find at once a region of his own,
A bower for his spirit, and will steer
To alleys where the fir-tree drops its cone,
Where robins hop, and fallen leaves are sear.

V.

THE LOVER LEFT BY HIS LOVE AT EVENING.

THE day is gone, and all its sweets are gone!
Sweet voice, sweet lips, soft hands, and softer breast,
Warm breath, light whisper, tender semitone,
Bright eyes, accomplished shape, and lang'rous waist!
Faded the flower and all its budded charms;
Faded the sight of beauty from my eyes;
Faded the shape of beauty from my arms;
Faded the voice, warmth, whiteness, paradise, —
Vanished unseasonably at shut of eve,
When the dusk holiday — or holinight —
Of fragrant-curtained love begins to weave
The woof of darkness thick, for hid delight;
But, as I've read love's missal through to-day,
He 'll let me sleep, seeing I fast and pray.

VI.

ON FAME.

FAME, like a wayward girl, will still be coy
To those who woo her with too slavish knees,
But makes surrender to some thoughtless boy,
And dotes the more upon a heart at ease:
She is a Gypsy, — will not speak to those
Who have not learnt to be content without her;
A Jilt, whose ear was never whispered close,
Who thinks they scandal her who talk about her;
A very Gypsy is she, Nilus-born,
Sister-in-law to jealous Potiphar;
Ye love-sick Bards! repay her scorn for scorn;
Ye Artists love-lorn! madmen that ye are!
Make your best bow to her and bid adieu;
Then if she likes it, she will follow you.

VII.

TO SLEEP.

O SOFT embalmer of the still midnight!
Shutting with careful fingers and benign
Our gloom-pleased eyes, embôwered from the light.
Enshaded in forgetfulness divine,
O soothest Sleep! if so it please thee, close,
In midst of this thine hymn, my willing eyes,
Or wait the amen, ere thy poppy throws
Around my head its lulling charities;
Then save me, or the passed day will shine
Upon my pillow, breeding many woes;
Save me from curious conscience, that still lords
Its strength, for darkness burrowing like a mole;
Turn the key deftly in the oiléd wards,
And seal the hushéd casket of my soul.

VIII.

TO J. H. REYNOLDS.

O THAT a week could be an age, and we
Felt parting and warm meeting every week;
Then one poor year a thousand years would be,
The flush of welcome ever on the cheek:
So would we live long life in little space;
So time itself would be annihilate;
So a day's journey in oblivious haze
To serve our joys would lengthen and dilate.
O to arrive each Monday morn from Ind!
To land each Tuesday from the rich Levant!
In little time a host of joys to bind,
And keep our souls in one eternal pant;
This morn, my friend, and yester evening taught
Me how to harbor such a happy thought.

IX.

ANSWER TO A SONNET ENDING THUS:

"Dark eyes are dearer far
Than those that made the hyacinthine bell."
By J. H. Reynolds.

Blue! 'T is the life of heaven, — the domain
Of Cynthia, — the wide palace of the sun, —
The tent of Hesperus, and all his train, —
The bosomer of clouds, gold, gray, and dun.
Blue! 'T is the life of waters, — ocean,
And all its vassal streams: pools numberless
May rage, and foam, and fret, but never can
Subside, if not to dark blue nativeness.
Blue! Gentle cousin of the forest green,
Married to green in all the sweetest flowers,
Forget-me-not, — the blue-bell, — and, that queen
Of secrecy, the violet; what strange powers
Hast thou, as a mere shadow! But how great,
When in an Eye thou art alive with fate!

X.

HIS LAST SONNET.

BRIGHT STAR! would I were steadfast as thou art!
Not in lone splendor hung aloft the night,
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like Nature's patient sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priestlike task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors:
No! yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel forever its soft fall and swell,
Awake forever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever, or else swoon to death.*

* Another reading: —

Half passionless, and so swoon on to death.

JAMES HENRY LEIGH HUNT.

I.

QUIET EVENINGS.

(To Thomas Barnes, Esq.)

Dear Barnes, whose native taste, solid and clear,
The throng of life has strengthened without harm,
You know the rural feeling, and the charm
That stillness has for a world-fretted ear:
'T is now deep whispering all about me here,
With thousand tiny hushings, like a swarm
Of atom bees, or fairies in alarm,
Or noise of numerous bliss from distant sphere.
This charm our evening hours duly restore, —
Naught heard through all our little, lulled abode,
Save the crisp fire, or leaf of book turned o'er,
Or watch-dog, or the ring of frosty road.
Wants there no other sound then? — Yes, one more, —
The voice of friendly visiting, long owed.

II.

TO THE GRASSHOPPER AND THE CRICKET.*

GREEN little vaulter in the sunny grass,
Catching your heart up at the feel of June,
Sole voice that's heard amidst the lazy noon,
When even the bees lag at the summoning brass;
And you, warm little housekeeper, who class
With those who think the candles come too soon,
Loving the fire, and with your tricksome tune
Nick the glad silent moments as they pass;
O sweet and tiny cousins, that belong
One to the fields, the other to the hearth,
Both have your sunshine; both, though small, are strong
At your clear hearts; and both seem given to earth
To sing in thoughtful ears this natural song, —
In doors and out, summer and winter, Mirth.

December, 1816.

* Written in the Vale of Health, Hampstead, and in companionship with that of Keats, on the same subject.

III.

TO MY WIFE.

(On Modelling my Bust.)

AH, Marian mine, the face you look on now
Is not exactly like my wedding day's;
Sunk is its cheek, deeper-retired its gaze,
Less white and smooth its temple-flattened brow.
Sorrow has been there with his silent plough,
And strait, stern hand. No matter, if it raise
Aught that affection fancies, it may praise,
Or make me worthier of Apollo's bough.
Loss, after all, — such loss especially, —
Is transfer, change, but not extinction, — no;
Part in our children's apple cheeks I see;
And, for the rest, while you look at me so,
Take care you do not smile it back to me,
And miss the copied furrows as you go.

IV.

TO KOSCIUSKO.

(Who never fought either for Bonaparte or the Allies.)

'T is like thy patient valor thus to keep,
Great Kosciusko, to the rural shade,
While Freedom's ill-found amulet still is made
Pretence for old aggression, and a heap
Of selfish mockeries. There, as in the sweep
Of stormier fields, thou earnest with thy blade,
Transformed, not inly altered, to the spade,
Thy never yielding right to a calm sleep.
There came a wanderer, borne from land to land
Upon a couch, pale, many-wounded, mild,
His brow with patient pain dulcetly sour.
Men stooped with awful sweetness on his hand,
And kissed it; and collected Virtue smiled,
To think how sovereign her enduring hour.

V.

ON A LOCK OF MILTON'S HAIR.

It lies before me there, and my own breath
Stirs its thin outer threads, as though beside
The living head I stood in honored pride,
Talking of lovely things that conquer death.
Perhaps he pressed it once, or underneath
Ran his fine fingers, when he leant, blank-eyed,
And saw, in fancy, Adam and his bride
With their rich locks, or his own Delphic wreath.
There seems a love in hair, though it be dead.
It is the gentlest, yet the strongest thread
Of our frail plant, — a blossom from the tree
Surviving the proud trunk; — as though it said,
Patience and Gentleness is Power. In me
Behold affectionate eternity.

VI.

THE NILE.

It flows through old hushed Egypt and its sands,
Like some grave mighty thought threading a dream,
And times and things, as in that vision, seem
Keeping along it their eternal stands,—
Caves, pillars, pyramids, the shepherd bands
That roamed through the young world, the glory extreme
Of high Sesostris, and that southern beam,
The laughing queen that caught the world's great hands.
Then comes a mightier silence, stern and strong,
As of a world left empty of its throng,
And the void weighs on us; and then we wake,
And hear the fruitful stream lapsing along
'Twixt villages, and think how we shall take
Our own calm journey on for human sake.

VINCENT LEIGH HUNT.

THE DEFORMED CHILD.*

AN Angel prisoned in an infant frame
Of mortal sickness and deformity,
Looks patiently from out that languid eye
Matured, and seeming large with pain. The name
Of "happy childhood" mocks his movements tame,
So propped with piteous crutch, or forced to lie
Rather than sit, in his frail chair, and try
To taste the pleasure of the unshared game.
He does; and faintly claps his withered hands
To see how Brother Willie caught the ball;
Kind Brother Willie, strong, yet gentle all:
'T was he that placed him where his chair now stands
In that warm corner, 'gainst the sunny wall.
God, in that brother, gave him more than lands.

* Vincent Leigh Hunt was the youngest son of Leigh Hunt, and inherited a large share of his father's poetical talents. He died when quite young. In a letter to me, Mr. Hunt thus speaks of him: "His whole life was full of sympathy. A sonnet like this will allow his father to indulge a hope, that, wherever any sonnets of his own may be thought worth collecting, they and it may never be parted." (S. A. L.)

LAMAN BLANCHARD.

I.

CREATIVENESS OF A LOVING EYE.

PLEASURES lie thickest where no pleasures seem:
There 's not a leaf that falls upon the ground
But holds some joy, of silence or of sound;
Some sprite begotten of a summer dream.
The very meanest things are made supreme
With innate ecstasy. No grain of sand
But moves a bright and million-peopled land,
And hath its Eden and its Eves, I deem.
For Love, though blind himself, a curious eye
Hath lent me, to behold the hearts of things,
And touched mine ear with power. Thus, far or nigh,
Minute or mighty, fixed or free with wings,
Delight, from many a nameless covert sly,
Peeps sparkling, and in tones familiar sings.

II.

A WISH FOR THE UNFADINGNESS OF THE LOVING EYE.

GAYLY and greenly let my seasons run;
And should the war-winds of the world uproot
The sanctities of life, and its sweet fruit
Cast forth as fuel for the fiery sun,
The dews be turned to ice, fair days begun
In peace wear out in pain, and sounds that suit
Despair and discord keep Hope's harp-strings mute,
Still let me live as love and life were one:
Still let me turn on earth a childlike gaze,
And trust the whispered charities that bring
Tidings of human truth; with inward praise
Watch the weak motion of each common thing,
And find it glorious: — still let me raise
On wintry wrecks an altar to the spring.

HARTLEY COLERIDGE.

I.

FIRST WORDS OF ADAM.

WHAT was 't awakened first the untried ear
Of that sole man who was all human kind?
Was it the gladsome welcome of the wind,
Stirring the leaves that never yet were sere?
The four mellifluous streams which flowed so near,
Their lulling murmurs all in one combined?
The note of bird unnamed? The startled hind
Bursting the brake, in wonder, not in fear,
Of her new lord? Or did the holy ground
Send forth mysterious melody to greet
The gracious pressure of immaculate feet?
Did viewless seraphs rustle all around,
Making sweet music out of air as sweet?
Or his own voice awake him with its sound?

II.

SONNET TO A FRIEND.

We parted on the mountains, as two streams
From one clear spring pursue their several ways;
And thy fleet course hath been through many a maze
In foreign lands, where silvery Padus gleams
To that delicious sky, whose glowing beams
Brightened the tresses that old poets praise;
Where Petrarch's patient love and artful lays,
And Ariosto's song of many themes,
Moved the soft air. But I, a lazy brook,
As close pent up within my native dell,
Have crept along from nook to shady nook,
Where flow'rets blow, and whispering Naiads dwell.
Yet now we meet, that parted were so wide,
O'er rough and smooth to travel side by side.

III.

Long time a child, and still a child, when years
Had painted manhood on my cheek, was I;
For yet I lived like one not born to die:
A thriftless prodigal of smiles and tears,
No hope I needed, and I knew no fears.
But sleep, though sweet, is only sleep; and waking,
I waked to sleep no more; at once o'ertaking
The vanguard of my age, with all arrears
Of duty on my back. — Nor child, nor man,
Nor youth, nor sage, I find my head is gray,
For I have lost the race I never ran;
A rathe December blights my lagging May;
And still I am a child, though I be old:
Time is my debtor for my years untold.

IV.

MAY-TIME IN ENGLAND.

(1832.)

Is this the merry May of tale and song?
Chill breathes the north, the sky looks chilly blue,
The waters wear a cold and iron hue,
Or wrinkle as the crisp wave creeps along,
Much like an ague-fit. The starry throng
Of flow'rets droop, o'erdone with drenching dew,
Or close their leaves at noon, as if they knew
And felt, in helpless wrath, the season's wrong.
Yet in the half-clad woods, the busy birds
Chirping with all their might to keep them warm,
The young hare flitting from her ferny form,
The vernal lowing of the amorous herds,
And swelling buds, impatient of delay,
Declare it should be, though it is not, May.

V.

SECOND NUPTIALS.

THERE is no jealousy in realms above :
The spirit, purified from earthly stain,
And knowing that its earthly loss was gain,
Transfers its property in earthly love
(Though love it was she does not yet reprove)
To her by Heaven appointed to sustain
The honored matron's part ; to bear the pain,
The joy, the duty, all things that behoove
A Christian wedded. She that dwells on high
May be a guardian angel to the wife
That her good husband chooses to supply
Her place, vacated in the noon of life ;
With holy gladness may support the bride
Through happy cares, to her by death denied.

VI.

A PREMATURE OLD BACHELOR, HE CONGRATULATES A BRIDEGROOM.

How shall a man foredoomed to lone estate,
Untimely old, irreverendly gray,
Much like a patch of dusky snow in May,—
Dead sleeping in a hollow, all too late,—
How shall so poor a thing congratulate
The best completion of a patient wooing,
Or how commend a younger man for doing
What ne'er to do hath been his fault, or fate?
There is a fable, that I once did read,
Of a bad angel that was someway good,
And therefore on the brink of Heaven he stood,
Looking each way, and no way could proceed;
Till at the last he purged away his sin,
By loving all the joy he saw within.

MRS. FELICIA DOROTHEA HEMANS.

I.

THE LILIES OF THE FIELD.

FLOWERS! — when the Saviour's calm, benignant eye
Fell on your gentle beauty, — when from you
That heavenly lesson for all hearts he drew,
Eternal, universal, as the sky, —
Then, in the bosom of your purity,
A voice he set, as in a temple-shrine,
That life's quick travellers ne'er might pass you by
Unwarned of that sweet oracle divine.
And though too oft its low, celestial sound,
By the harsh notes of work-day Care is drowned,
And the loud steps of vain unlistening Haste,
Yet the great ocean hath no tone of power
Mightier to reach the soul, in thought's hushed hour,
Than yours, ye Lilies! chosen thus and graced!

II.

A VERNAL THOUGHT.

O FESTAL Spring! 'midst thy victorious glow,
Far-spreading o'er the kindled woods and plains,
And streams that bound to meet thee from thy chains,
Well might there lurk the shadow of a woe
For human hearts, and in the exulting flow
Of thy rich songs a melancholy tone,
Were we of mould all earthly; *we* alone,
Severed from thy great spell, and doomed to go
Farther, still farther, from our sunny time,
Never to feel the breathings of our prime,
Never to flower again! — But we, O Spring!
Cheered by deep whispers not of earth,
Press to the regions of thy heavenly birth,
As here thy flowers and birds press on to bloom and sing.

III.

FLOWERS.

WELCOME, O pure and lovely forms, again
Unto the shadowy stillness of my room!
For not alone ye bring a joyous train
Of summer-thoughts attendant on your bloom, —
Visions of freshness, of rich bowery gloom,
Of the low murmurs filling mossy dells,
Of stars that look down on your folded bells
Through dewy leaves, of many a wild perfume,
Greeting the wanderer of the hill and grove
Like sudden music; more than this ye bring —
Far more; ye whisper of the all-fostering love
Which thus hath clothed you, and whose dove-like wing
Broods o'er the sufferer drawing fevered breath,
Whether the couch be that of life or death.

IV.

THE TWILIGHT HOUR.*

I LOVE to hail the mild and balmy hour,
When evening spreads around her twilight veil;
When dews descend on every languid flower,
And sweet and tranquil is the summer gale.
Then let me wander by the peaceful tide,
While o'er the wave the breezes lightly play;
To hear the waters murmur as they glide,
To mark the fading smile of closing day.
There let me linger, blest in visions dear,
Till the soft moonbeams tremble on the seas;
While melting sounds decay on fancy's ear,
Of airy music floating on the breeze.
For still when evening sheds the genial dews,
That pensive hour is sacred to the muse.

* Written at the age of thirteen.

V.

SABBATH SONNET.

(Composed a few days before her death, and dedicated to her brother.)

How many blessed groups this hour are bending,
Through England's primrose meadow-paths, their way
Towards spire and tower, 'midst shadowy elms ascending,
Whence the sweet chimes proclaim the hallowed day!
The halls from old heroic ages gray
Pour their fair children forth; and hamlets low,
With whose thick orchard-blooms the soft winds play,
Send out their inmates in a happy flow,
Like a freed vernal stream. I may not tread
With them those pathways, — to the feverish bed
Of sickness bound; — yet, O my God! I bless
Thy mercy, that with Sabbath peace hath filled
My chastened heart, and all its throbbings stilled
To one deep calm of lowliest thankfulness!

THOMAS HOOD.

I.

WRITTEN IN A VOLUME OF SHAKESPEARE.

How bravely Autumn paints upon the sky
The gorgeous fame of Summer which is fled!
Hues of all flowers that in their ashes lie,
Trophied in that fair light whereon they fed, —
Tulip, and hyacinth, and sweet rose red, —
Like exhalations from the leafy mould.
Look here how honor glorifies the dead,
And warms their scutcheons with a glance of gold! —
Such is the memory of poets old,
Who on Parnassus' hill have bloomed elate;
Now they are laid under their marbles cold,
And turned to clay, whereof they were create;
But God Apollo hath them all enrolled,
And blazoned on the very clouds of fate!

II.

TO FANCY.

Most delicate Ariel! submissive thing,
Won by the mind's high magic to its hest,
Invisible embassy, or secret guest,
Weighing the light air on a lighter wing; —
Whether into the midnight moon, to bring
Illuminate visions to the eye of rest,
Or rich romances from the florid West,
Or to the sea, for mystic whispering, —
Still by thy charmed allegiance to the will,
The fruitful wishes prosper in the brain,
As by the fingering of fairy skill, —
Moonlight, and waters, and soft music's strain,
Odors, and blooms, and *my* Miranda's smile,
Making this dull world an enchanted isle.

III.

TO A SLEEPING CHILD.

O, 'T IS a touching thing to make one weep, —
A tender infant with its curtained eye,
Breathing as it would neither live nor die,
With that unchanging countenance of sleep!
As if its silent dream, serene and deep,
Had lined its slumber with a still blue sky,
So that the passive cheeks unconscious lie
With no more life than roses, — just to keep
The blushes warm, and the mild, odorous breath.
O blossom boy! so calm is thy repose,
So sweet a compromise of life and death,
'T is pity those fair buds should e'er unclose
For memory to stain their inward leaf,
Tinging thy dreams with unacquainted grief.

IV.

TO A SLEEPING CHILD.

THINE eyelids slept so beauteously, I deemed
No eyes could wake so beautiful as they;
Thy rosy cheeks in such still slumbers lay,
I loved their peacefulness, nor ever dreamed
Of dimples: — for those parted lips so seemed,
I never thought a smile could sweetlier play,
Nor that so graceful life could chase away
Thy graceful death, — till those blue eyes upbeamed.
Now slumber lies in dimpled eddies drowned,
And roses bloom more rosily for joy,
And odorous silence ripens into sound,
And fingers move to sound. — All-beauteous boy!
How dost thou waken into smiles, and prove,
If not more lovely, thou art more like Love!

V.

DEATH.

It is not death, that some time in a sigh
This eloquent breath shall take its speechless flight;
That some time these bright stars, that now reply
In sunlight to the sun, shall set in night;
That this warm conscious flesh shall perish quite,
And all life's ruddy springs forget to flow;
That thoughts shall cease, and the immortal spright
Be lapped in alien clay and laid below;
It is not death to know this, — but to know
That pious thoughts, which visit at new graves
In tender pilgrimage, will cease to go
So duly and so oft; — and when grass waves
Over the past-away, there may be then
No resurrection in the minds of men.

VI.

LOVE.

Love, dearest Lady, such as I would speak,
Lives not within the humor of the eye;—
Not being but an outward phantasy,
That skims the surface of a tinted cheek.
Else it would wane with beauty, and grow weak,—
As if the rose made summer,—and so lie
Amongst the perishable things that die,
Unlike the love which I would give and seek,
Whose health is of no hue to feel decay
With cheeks' decay, that have a rosy prime.
Love is its own great loveliness alway,
And takes new lustre from the touch of time;
Its bough owns no December and no May,
But bears its blossom into Winter's clime.

BRYAN WALLER PROCTER.

I.

SPRING.

It is not that sweet herbs and flowers alone
Start up, like spirits that have lain asleep
In their great mother's icéd bosom deep,
For months; or that the birds, more joyous grown,
Catch once again their silver summer tone;
And they who late from bough to bough did creep,
Now trim their plumes upon some sunny steep,
And seem to sing of Winter overthrown.
No: — with an equal march, the immortal mind,
As though it never would be left behind,
Keeps pace with every movement of the year;
And (for high truths are born in happiness)
As the warm heart expands, the eye grows clear,
And sees beyond the slave's or bigot's guess.

II.

A STILL PLACE.

UNDER what beechen shade or silent oak
Lies the mute sylvan now, mysterious Pan?
Once, (while rich Peneus and Ilissus ran
Clear from their fountains,) as the morning broke,
'T is said the Satyr with Apollo spoke,
And to harmonious strife with his wild reed
Challenged the god, whose music was indeed
Divine, and fit for heaven. Each played, and woke
Beautiful sounds to life, — deep melodies;
One blew his pastoral pipe with such nice care
That flocks and birds all answered him; and one
Shook his immortal showers upon the air.
That music hath ascended to the sun;
But where the other? Speak, ye dells and trees!

III.

TO ADELAIDE.

CHILD of my heart! my sweet beloved First-Born!
Thou dove, who tidings bring'st of calmer hours!
Thou rainbow, who dost shine when all the showers
Are past, — or passing! Rose, which hath no thorn,
No spot, no blemish, — pure, and unforlorn!
Untouched, untainted! O, my Flower of flowers!
More welcome than to bees are summer bowers,
To stranded seamen life-assuring morn!
Welcomes, — a thousand welcomes! Care, who clings
Round all, seems loosening now his serpent fold,
New hope springs upward, and the bright world seems
Cast back into a youth of endless springs!
Sweet mother, is it so? — or, grow I old,
Bewildered in divine Elysian dreams?

IV.

TO EDITH. — 1845.

LIKE thy first Sister, when her years were few,
And Nature through her gentlest instinct taught,
(Till Time the Soul's bright pinions outward drew,
And Reason with Imagination wrought,)
Mayst thou take note — as a good child should do —
Of all things best in her, of deed and thought:
Mayst thou be prudent, wise, sweet-tempered, true,
Trustful, but by no specious error caught;
God bless thee! May thy blameless life be hung
With garlands of delight! May Peace, the dove,
Dwell in thine heart through long and prosperous days!
May Truth e'er warn thee with an Angel's tongue!
May Earth's best children meet thy love with love;
And Heaven smile on thee in a thousand ways!

WILLIAM HENRY WHITWORTH.

I.

THE PYRAMIDS.

WHENCE and what are ye, or what have ye been?
So the dwarfed pilgrim of the desert sand
Cries, wondering. On Eternity's lone strand,
Unwept by Time's dark waters, they are seen
(Each like that giant old of hoar Cyllene
Who propped the starry axle with his hand)
The Caryatides of Heaven, to stand
In calm and noiseless majesty serene.
Ah! not the minions of an idol fane,
But monuments of Hope, ye tower sublime,
To show despairing man his soul shall reign
Immortal, in some bright and glorious clime,
If thus the labors of his hand remain
Triumphant over Death, and Fate, and Time!

II.

NIPPED BUDS BETTER THAN LATER DISAPPOINTMENTS.

WHO wishes the wild wind to blow, nor grieves
To see spring buds of promise falling down,
As brief as they are fair, before the brown
And faded wreaths the last year's tempest leaves?
There had the small birds on long summer eves
Sung, careless how sere Autumn, with his crown
Of amber beads and saffron-colored gown,
The widowed woods of all their bloom bereaves.
Yet are the happiest of the happy they
(Did they but know their happiness) who go
Before our hopes, those flowers of life, decay.
They rest as soft and silent as the snow
By the sea-shore on some calm winter's day:
Alas! who would not wish the wind to blow!

THOMAS DOUBLEDAY.

I.

THE POET'S SOLITUDE.

THINK not the Poet's life — although his cell
Be seldom printed by the stranger's feet —
Hath not its silent plenitude of sweet:
Look at yon lone and solitary dell;
The stream that loiters 'mid its stones can tell
What flowerets its unnoted waters meet,
What odors o'er its narrow margin fleet;
Ay, and the Poet can repeat as well; —
The foxglove, closing inly, like a shell;
The hyacinth; the rose, of buds the chief;
The thorn, bediamonded with dewy showers;
The thyme's wild fragrance, and the heather bell;
All, all are there. So vain is the belief
That the sequestered path has fewest flowers.

II.

LIFE.

COME, track with me this little vagrant rill,
Wandering its wild course from the mountain's breast;
Now with a brink fantastic, heather-drest,
And playing with the stooping flowers at will;
Now moving scarce, with noiseless step and still:
Anon, it seems to weary of its rest,
And hurries on, leaping with sparkling zest
Adown the ledges of the broken hill.
So let us live. Is not the life well-spent
Which loves the lot that kindly Nature weaves
For all inheriting or adorning Earth?
Which throws light pleasure over true content,
Blossoms with fruitage, flowers as well as leaves,
And sweetens wisdom with a taste of mirth.

WILLIAM GREEN.

I.

A SULTRY SUMMER AFTERNOON.

FAR off the rook, tired by the midday beam,
Caws lazily this summer afternoon;
The butterflies, with wandering up and down
O'er flower-bright marsh and meadow, wearied seem;
With vacant gaze, lost in a waking dream,
We, listless, on the busy insects pore,
In rapid dance uncertain, darting o'er
The smooth-spread surface of the tepid stream.
The air is slothful, and will scarce convey
Soft sounds of idle waters to the ear:
In brightly-dim obscurity appear
The distant hills which skirt the landscape gay;
While restless fancy owns th' unnerving sway
In visions often changed, but nothing clear.

II.

MELODY AND HARMONY.

MUSIC, high maid, at first, essaying, drew
Rude sketches for the ear; till, with skilled hand
She traced the flowing outline, simply grand
In varied groups to grace and nature true;
And this was MELODY. Her knowledge grew,
And, more to finish, as her powers expand,
Those beauteous draughts, a noble scheme she planned,
And o'er the whole a glow of coloring threw, —
Evening's rich painting on a pencilled sky, —
Tints that with sweet accord bewitch the sense;
'T was HARMONY. The common crowd that press
Around prefer the charms these hues dispense,
As they chance-mingled on the palette lie,
To her white forms of undecked loveliness.

III.

GENTLE GREATNESS UNDERVALUED, TILL LOST.

FROM the unbarring to the shut of day,
Ay, ofttimes restless in the midnight blind,
His loss I mourn ; it lies upon my mind
Like a thick mist that will not clear away,—
But bodes, and brings, grief's showers. His was a sway
Of soul so gentle, we alone might *find*,
Not *see* its strength ; a wit, that, ever kind,
Would spare the humbled in its freest play ;—
A silent, boastless stream, smooth, clear, but deep ;—
His mighty powers attired themselves so plain
They drew no worship though they won the heart :
Now he is gone, we waken from the sleep ;
But, as of visiting gods the poets feign,
We knew him not, till turning to depart.

CHARLES STRONG.

I.

My window's open to the evening sky,
The solemn trees are fringed with golden light,
The lawn here shadowed lies, there kindles bright,
And cherished roses lift their incense high:
The punctual thrush, on plane-tree warbling nigh,
With loud and luscious voice calls down the night;
Dim waters, flowing on with gentle might,
Between each pause are heard to murmur by.
The book that told of wars in holy land
(Nor less than Tasso sounded in mine ears)
Escapes unheeded from my listless hand.
Poets, whom Nature for her service rears,
Like priests in her great temple minist'ring stand,
But in her glory fade when she appears.

II.

SUNRISE AT SEA, ON A SOUTHERN MISTY MORNING.

ROUSED by the billows' melancholy dirge,
I woke, as Night her sable banner furled;
What time pale mists, in forms fantastic curled,
Like spectral shapes, come flitting o'er the surge:
Then, looking eastward, o'er the ocean's verge,
From the near sun I saw red flashes hurled,
As rolls the pageant from the nether world,
And from the waves the golden wheels emerge.
Never of old did more portentous light
Suspend the seaman's oar, when, like a pyre,
Lemnos appeared at evening, kindling bright;
Rather — when tasked by Jove, in sudden ire,
The god was laboring with his crew all night,
On glowing anvils shaping forkéd fire.

III.

A MOMENT OF DREAD IN MODERN POMPEII.

I NEVER with such horror stood aghast,
As when, in lone Pompeii's silent street,
I felt thy mighty pulse, Vesuvius, beat,
And from thy jaws saw burst the fiery blast.
Thunders were loud, and smoke in columns vast
Mantled the air with darkness, and strange heat
Warned the sad peasant from his vine-clad seat,
As down the fruitful slope the red stream passed.
I feared lest might return that dreadful hour,
When to their gods for help the people ran,
And there was none, in temple, nor in tower:
And to my vision came the enthusiast man,
Who perished in the breath of that foul shower,
Nature's dread secrets obstinate to scan.*

* The elder Pliny.

IV.

LOVELY COMPANIONSHIP.

SHE grieved that her loved season's pensive hue,
Its colors sadly gay, so soon should fade,
And she not seek, in thoughtful mood, the glade,
Nor from gray steep the mellow landscape view:
Others too grieved, that one so fond, so true,
Marked not with them each sudden gleam and shade,
The leaf's light fall, the stillness deeper made
By rustling breeze, or bird forlorn and few.
O pure delight, when minds are well agreed,
To commune thus with WOMAN! — early taught
In Nature's page devotedly to read, —
Lady, with *thee!* who in thy vernal hour,
Like some heaven-favored plant, art richly fraught
With Wisdom's golden fruit and Beauty's flower.

RICHARD CHENEVIX TRENCH.

I.

ENJOY THE PRESENT.

WE live not in our moments or our years;
The Present we fling from us like the rind
Of some sweet Future, which we after find
Bitter to taste; or bind *that* in with fears,
And water it beforehand with our tears,
Vain tears for that which never may arrive.
Meanwhile, the joy whereby we ought to live,
Neglected, or unheeded, disappears.
Wiser it were to welcome and make ours
Whate'er of good, though small, the Present brings, —
Kind greetings, sunshine, song of birds, and flowers,
With a child's pure delight in little things;
And of the griefs unborn to rest secure,
Knowing that Mercy ever will endure.

I.

TO NICHOLAS, EMPEROR OF RUSSIA.

(ON HIS REPORTED CONDUCT TOWARDS THE POLES.)

WHAT would it help to call thee what thou art?
When all is spoken, thou remainest still
With the same power, and the same evil will
To crush a nation's life out; to dispart
All holiest ties; to turn awry and thwart
All courses that kind Nature keeps; to spill
The blood of noblest veins; to maim, or kill
With torture of slow pain, the aching heart.
When our weak hands hang useless, and we feel
Deeds cannot be, who then would ease his brea
With the impotence of words? But our appeal
Is unto Him who counts a nation's tears;
With whom are the oppressor and oppressed,
And vengeance, and the recompensing years.

III.

TO SILVIO PELLICO.

(ON READING THE ACCOUNT OF HIS IMPRISONMENT.)

AH! who may guess, who yet was never tried,
How fearful the temptation to reply,
With wrong for wrong; yea, fiercely to defy
In spirit, even where action is denied?
Therefore praise waits on thee, not drawn aside
By this strong lure of hell; on thee, whose eye,
Being formed by love, could everywhere descry
Love, or some workings unto love allied;
And benediction on the grace that dealt
So with thy soul; and prayer, more earnest prayer,
Intenser longing than before we felt,
For all that in dark places lying are;
For captives in strange lands; for them who pine
In depth of dungeon, or in sunless mine.

SIR JOHN HANMER.

I.

AMERICA.

GREAT people, whom across the Atlantic seas,
Our thoughts, expanding with the space, behold;
And know thy starry front, serene and bold,
E'en as Orion, when the winters freeze;
Thy distance fades by changing moon's degrees;
Peace hovers o'er the middle depths, to hold
On either side her scales of antique gold,
Spanning the depths: but not alone for these;
But, that ye come from an ancestral line
That hence departed, keeping freedom's ways,
And speak the language that the band divine
And storied memories of great deeds did raise,
When the old world was wondrous; let the sign
Of love shine out betwixt us, in our days.

II.

PETRARCA.

Not vainly didst thou sing thy lifetime long,
Petrarca, of a fair and gentle dame;
And with the winds fan love's enduring flame,
Wandering the hills and the quick streams among;
For Time hath listened to thy passionate song;
Whose years like pilgrims to Valchiusa came.
Sighing thou wentest all thy days; but Fame
Filled her clear trump with thine imagined wrong;
Then from the banks of that Provençal river,
Soared loftier accents, 'neath the Alps' blue gleam;
And at thy voice rose one who would deliver
His Rome and thine; O noble poet-dream!
The Belisarian weeds did stir and shiver
On her old walls at that electric theme.

III.

THE STEAMBOAT.

WHITE wings, that o'er the hyacinthine sea
With joy or hope or sorrow long have sped;
Since first he voyaged whom the Colchian wed,
Bearing lone ships o'er many a salt degree;—
A voice came thence, where ye were wont to be,
A strange and serpent utterance; high o'erhead
Trailed its dark breath; and with Ixion's tread
A keel passed by, mocking the stormy lee.
Into the rack, far lessening, on it went,
As once that antique lover of the cloud;
While ye to veering winds were bowed and bent;
And Ocean roared with his great voice aloud,
Lashing his waves 'gainst isle and continent,
Vexed with the wake that wheel-borne ship had ploughed.

IV.

THE PINE WOODS.

We stand upon the Moorish mountain-side,
From age to age, a solemn company;
There are no voices in our paths, but we
Hear the great whirlwinds roaring loud and wide,
And like the sea-waves have our boughs replied,
From the beginning, to their stormy glee;
The thunder rolls above us, and some tree
Smites with his bolt; yet doth the race abide,
Answering all times; but joyous, when the sun
Glints on the peaks that clouds no longer bear;
And the young shoots to flourish have begun;
And the quick seeds through the blue odorous air
From the expanding cones fall one by one;
And silence, as in temples, dwelleth there.

V.

SINGING-BIRDS.

SWEET is thy voice, embowered Nightingale,
But for thy praise would fail my weaker song;
Sweet all thy airy kindred, that belong
To Nature's happiest haunts, by field or vale;
And some there are, that, in the shadows pale
Of cavernous dim towns, make yearn the throng;
Prisoners are they, and blind, yet seems more strong
The melody of their lives' remembered tale.
Ye are the accepted poets: wheresoe'er
Your notes have sounded, joy hath thither come,
As flowers to forest wells, serene and clear:
Fame wears ye not, that eats the hearts of some:
Those unambitious accents man doth hear,
And straight the importunate voice of self is done.

VI.

ART.

As o'er the sea's deep world-sustaining breast,
Climbing the steep horizon, onward bear
The thought-winged ships, and each his track more fair
Believes, for 't is his own, than all the rest;
Which not the less doth fade, as 't is imprest;
And the great waters, and cloud-traversed air,
With their enduring might, are only there,
And space of days unmeasured, east and west:
Dread realms of Art, illimitable as ocean,
So fares man's spirit o'er your region waves,
Proudly and lonely, with a choral motion;
Sunshine he courts, but tempests too he braves;
Seeking the port, where, for their heart's devotion,
Fame lights her star over such seamen's graves.

VII.

CHAUCER.

WHEN I remember how, nor separate chance,
Nor restless traffic, peopling many a shore,
Nor old tradition with innumerous lore,
But poets wrought our best inheritance;
Sweet words and noble, in their *gay science*
That England heard, and then forevermore
Loved as her own, and did with deeds adore;
I bless thee with a kindred heart, Provence:
For to thy tales, like waves that come and go,
Sat Chaucer listening with exulting ear,
And casting his own phrase in giant mould,
That still had charms for sorrow's gentlest tear
Telling the story of Griselda's woe,
"Under the roots of Vesulus the cold."

VIII.

THE MERCHANT.

NAKED wast thou, at thy birth-time, utterly,
Merchant whose sails are furled; and now the birds
Build under thy broad cornices, and the herds
Sleep in the shadow of thy planted tree;
The waves have borne thee onward; thou mayst see
The stars in new perspective; the full thirds
Of thy great wealth no more are inky words,
Paper and trust, but woods and swelling lea.
Then wilt thou keep the balance in thine house,
Emblem of just seigniory, and the cause?
Or with those harlequin heralds poorly feign?
Keep it; for noble citizenship thus,
And truth, the fountain that doth never pause,
Free from the weeds of folly thou wilt maintain.

HENRY ALFORD.

RISE, said the Master, come unto the feast:
She heard the call, and rose with willing feet;
But thinking it not otherwise than meet
For such a bidding to put on her best,
She is gone from us for a few short hours
Into her bridal closet, there to wait
For the unfolding of the palace gate
That gives her entrance to the blissful bowers.
We have not seen her yet, though we have been
Full often to her chamber door, and oft
Have listened underneath the postern green,
And laid fresh flowers, and whispered short and soft:
But she hath made no answer; and the day
From the clear west is fading fast away.

ARTHUR BROOKE.

RESIGNATION.

If from the chaos of my youthful fate
Have been shaped out some elements of rest;
If, beyond hope, the madness of my breast
Hath felt at least its paroxysms abate,
Leaving my heart next wholly desolate;
If, in my brain, where, like a spirit unblest,
Thought long was racked, now peace can claim a nest,
In halcyon hours, to musing consecrate;
Throned on composure, if the soul thus reigns,
Suffering no hopes to allure, no dreams to abuse,
But, o'er the wreck of perished joys and pains,
Calmly contemplative its course pursues,
Strong, self-possessed, — 't is not from what it gains,
But what it can resign, such power accrues.

EDMUND PEEL.

I.

TO THE RIVER TEES.

TEES! if the wells we draw from shed no light,
Thou hast a voice to gladden thy green dale,
Till the rocks founder and the mountains fail.
Plunge, and roll on, in full harmonious might,
Based on primeval adamantine right!
Wind out, and reach, and murmur down the vale;
Or in a torrent, white as stony hail,
Strike the deep caves of thunder, black as night,
Whose walls stand fast forever! What am I
Thy depths to fathom, or to wield thy force,
Or of thy shoals to babble, Various One?
We came alike from yonder equal sky.
Could I but run thy clear and sonorous course,
Rejoicing thousands, disappointing none!

II.

ZEAL WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE.

To save the soul, to purchase Paradise,
By voluntary woe and wilful pain,
Tried in all ages, still is tried in vain.
The wheels of Juggernaut crush out the cries
Of hideous unavailing sacrifice,
As when to Moloch reeked the bloody plain!
As when the fire-devoted shrieked amain!
As when lean agony, in lowly guise,
Groaned on the lofty pillar! — Better pray
For light, than hold a taper unapproved, —
Than give a wrong direction to the blind!
Elijah laughed to scorn the frantic bray
And the red gashes, which to frenzy moved
Zeal without knowledge, plaguing human kind.

III.

TO WINTER.

THOU of the snowy vest and frosted hair,
With icicles down-hanging, Winter, hail!
Never be mine against a power to rail;
Ancient as Night! to deem thee void and bare,
Cousin of Death, twin-brother of Despair!
Rather shall praises in my song prevail,
Praises of Him who gives us to inhale
The freshness of the uninfected air.
So long as I behold the clear blue sky,
The carol of the robin-redbreast hear,
And o'er the frozen waters seem to fly;
Or, softly cushioned, while the fire burns clear,
Bask in the light of a beloved eye,
So long, O Winter! to my soul be dear.

SIR AUBREY DE VERE.

I.

TIME MISSPENT.*

THERE is no remedy for time misspent;
No healing for the waste of idleness,
Whose very languor is a punishment
Heavier than active souls can feel or guess.
O hours of indolence and discontent,
Not now to be redeemed! ye sting not less,
Because I know this span of life was lent
For lofty duties, not for selfishness.
Not to be whiled away in aimless dreams,
But to improve ourselves, and serve mankind,
Life and its choicest faculties were given.
Man should be ever better than he seems;
And shape his acts, and discipline his mind,
To walk, adorning earth, with hope of heaven.

* From "A Song of Faith, Devout Exercises, and Sonnets, by Sir Aubrey de Vere, Bart., 1842."

II.

ORIGIN OF THE SOUL.

It cannot be that by traduction come
Our souls, like growth of the corporeal frame:
This earth is to the flesh a natural home;
But spirit is of heaven, from whence it came,
And tends aspiring, — an ethereal flame,
Sacred, as are the fires of martyrdom!
All else is mystery. We hear a name,
But meet no phantom risen from the tomb.
What shall we think then? Ere this world was born,
Were souls, countless as beams of stellar light,
Called forth? or as our flesh demands? The night
Of childhood, and man's meditative morn,
Thrill with vague memories; and blind impulse brings
Shadows perplexed of pre-existing things!

III.

THE OPENING OF THE TOMB OF CHARLEMAGNE.

AMID the cloistered gloom of Aachèn's aisle
Stood Otho, Germany's imperial lord,
Regarding, with a melancholy smile,
A simple stone, where, fitly to record
A world of action by a single word,
Was graven "Carlo-Magno." Regal style
Was needed none; that name such thoughts restored
As sadden, yet make nobler, men the while.
They rolled the marble back. With sudden gasp,
A moment o'er the vault the Kaiser bent,
Where still a mortal monarch seemed to reign.
Crowned on his throne, a sceptre in his grasp,
Perfect in each gigantic lineament,
Otho looked face to face on Charlemagne.

IV.

DIOCLETIAN AT SALONA.

TAKE back these vain insignia of command,
Crown, truncheon, golden eagle, bawbles all,
And robe of Tyrian dye, to me a pall;
And be forever alien to my hand,
Though laurel-wreathed, War's desolating brand.
I would have friends, not courtiers, in my hall;
Wise books, learn'd converse, beauty free from thrall,
And leisure for good deeds, thoughtfully planned.
Farewell, thou garish World! thou Italy,
False widow of departed Liberty!
I scorn thy base caresses. Welcome the roll,
Between us, of mine own bright Adrian sea!
Welcome these wilds, from whose bold heights my soul
Looks down on your degenerate Capitol!

V.

QUEEN ELIZABETH.

THE lioness that stalks the forest bound
More awful in her presence and her port,
Looked not than she: high in her cloudy court
The rock-throned osprey, glancing sternly round
Through sun-lit air unshaken by a sound,
From low desires and the base world's resort
Seemed elevated less: the dolphin's sport
O'er foam-flecked waves and sapphire depths profound
Showed not a pageant to the eye of morn
More bright. Her thoughts were in the purple born;
Her eye was empery; she gave the nod,
And all obeyed; all earthly powers with scorn
She noted; yea, the fane itself she trod
As though she were the sister of a god!

DAVID LESTER RICHARDSON.

I.

TO MY TWIN BOYS.*

YE seem not, sweet ones, formed for human care;
Your dreams are tinged by heaven; your glad eyes meet
A charm in every scene; for all things greet
The dawn of life with hues divinely fair.
How brightly yet your laughing features wear
The bloom of early joy! Your bosoms beat
With no bewildering fear; your cup is sweet;
The manna of delight is melting there.
Twin buds of life and love! my hope and pride!
Fair priceless jewels of a father's heart!
Stars of my home! No saddening shadows hide
Your beauty now. Your stainless years depart
Like glittering streams that softly murmur by,
Or white-winged birds that pierce the sunny sky.

* "Literary Leaves, or Prose and Verse, by D. L. Richardson." Calcutta, 1836.

II.

FINE WEATHER AT SEA.

THE plain of ocean 'neath the crystal air
Its azure bound extends; the circle wide
Is sharply clear; contrasted hues divide
The sky and water. Clouds, like hills of
The winter's snow-wrought mantle, brightly fair,
Rest on the main's blue marge. As shadows glide
O'er dew-decked fields, the calm ship seems to slide
O'er glassy paths that catch the noontide glare,
As if bestrewn with diamonds. Quickly play
The small crisp waves, that musically break
Their shining peaks. And now, if aught can make
Celestial spirits wing their downward way,
Methinks they glitter in the proud sun's wake,
And breathe a glorious beauty on the day.

III.

A CALM AFTER A GALE.

THE mountain mists now roll on sultry airs ;
Unheard and slow the huge waves heave around,
That lately roared in wrath. The storm-fiend, bound
Within his unseen cave, no longer tears
The vexed and wearied main. The moon appears,
Uncurtaining wide her azure realms profound
To cheer the sullen night. Though not a sound
Reposing Nature breathes, my rapt soul hears
The far-off murmur of my native streams,
Like music from the stars. The silver tone
Is memory's lingering echo. Ocean's zone
Infolds me from the past. This small bark seems
The centre of the world, — an island lone ;
And love's dear forms are like departed dreams.

IV.

EVENING AT SEA.

How calm and beautiful! The broad sun now
Behind its rosy curtain lingering stays;
Yet, downward and above, the glorious rays
Pierce the blue flood, and in the warm air glow,
While clouds from either side, like pillars, throw
Their long gigantic shadows o'er the main;—
Between their dusky bounds, like golden rain,
Though still the sunbeams on the waves below
A shower of radiance shed, the misty veil
Of twilight spreads around;—the orient sky
Is mingling with the sea; the distant sail
Hangs like a dim-discovered cloud on high,
And faintly bears the cold, unearthly ray,
Of yon pale moon, that seems the ghost of day.

END OF VOL. I.

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